

PM: End Western media monopoly

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today expressed Malaysia's "particular concern" over the frequent incidents of misreporting, "deliberate or otherwise" concerning the country's affairs in the foreign Press, especially by Western journalists.

"Lately, as a result of our legitimate attempts to gain control of our own resources, we have been subjected to various reports calculated to frighten away foreign investors from our country," he said.

"Against this campaign, we are literally helpless," he said at the fifth general assembly of the Organisation of Asian News Agencies (OANA) here.

The Prime Minister stressed that Third World countries have for far too long suffered from ill-treatment by the powerful Western agencies.

He added that Western newspapers had given insufficient space to news happenings in Third World countries despite what the latter's media had given them.

"Whatever the reasons for the current state of affairs, it is evident that this information imbalance between developed and developing countries can no longer be accepted by us in the Third World," he said.

Deliberate

The Prime Minister recalled that the foreign Press had painted a distorted picture over the May 13 incident and had implicitly predicted that Malaysia could be written off.

"Malaysia, on the contrary, did not only get over her difficulties, but emerged stronger, more united and more prosperous than ever before," he added.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said three days ago he had received a telegram from the International Press Institute which carried an implied threat to the country's image.

He added that this referred to his article on Press freedom which was published in a local newspaper recently.

"The telegram pointed out that United Nations

members had accepted human rights to include 'freedom...to impart ideas of all kinds...'"

"But what I did was to impart my ideas through the media, an exercise of one of the human rights to which I am entitled as much as anyone else," he contended.

He added that it was strange that an institute which was supposed to protect one's rights, should seek to deny it, adding that when deliberate misreporting, and agitations were published in the Press, no comment was heard from such a body.

The Prime Minister said the United Nations principles were written by developed countries before developing nations were admitted as members.

"Now that the membership of the United Nations is greatly enlarged, some of the loaded prin-

ciples should be reviewed," he said.

He felt that the time had come for the Asian News Exchange concept to be translated into reality as the first step towards the establishment of a New World Information and Communication order.

Equitable

He expressed the hope that it would not be too long before Asia's image is painted by Asians themselves rather than by outsiders who were "neither sensitive nor sympathetic to our cause."

He hoped that a just and equitable distribution within and beyond the region would help towards the promotion of regional understanding.

The President of OANA, Mr August Marpaung, head of the Indonesian news agency Antara said the planned Asian News Network was

not intended to replace the international news services.

"What we want to do is to complement these transnational news services to fill the gaps in their coverage of our countries, to present our side of the story and to present the Asian reality to the world," he said.

Mr Marpaung said the news network would be launched at the end of the four-day assembly.

OANA officials said there were no major problems facing the set-up and that most of the member agencies were already linked with each other indirectly through bilateral news exchanges.

They said that while the entire contents of the news exchange would be brought into each country, it would be up to the national news agency how much of it should actually be distributed within the country.