

# PM: Rethink on liberal policy because of misuse

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sun — The Government has begun to "rethink" its liberal policy because of misuse of the policy, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

When I became Prime Minister, one of the things I wanted to do was to be liberal with the papers.

"That is why we have given out more KDNs (newspaper and magazine licences) over the last three years than the last 20 years.

"Anybody who wanted to publish anything was allowed to do so but I have found that to be liberal doesn't seem to be appreciated. There are those who want to misuse that liberalism.

"Therefore we have begun to rethink about being liberal. There are people who hide behind others, people of some influence, and get away with what they say.

"We know all about

it, but the Government is rethinking about this.

If these people seek the help of foreign newspapers to run down the country and say how un-democratic we are, we don't care about foreign opinion about us.

"There are all kinds of stories that we are not liberal. I couldn't care less. You can tell all these magazines they can go and...

"Freedom of the Press throughout the world is controlled. Some by Government, some by owners, some by unions, some by editors... there is no such thing as a free Press.

"The Government is elected by the people and I have a responsibility to the people of this country."

## Dissent

In his comments on the Press after chairing a Barisan Nasional Supreme Council meeting, Dr Mahathir said he re-

gretted that some of the things he wanted to highlight were not done but instead other things which he said were given prominence, creating a different impression.

"Newspapers must contribute towards stability. They must not say that the economy is going to the dogs when our economy is growing at six per cent. A lot of people are investing in this country.

"When there are no complaints, they blow it out of proportion. That is irresponsible.

"The Press should always think of what they can do so that the people can have a good life.

"We have to be responsible because every five years we have to be voted in or out. If all editors are up for election that will be nice.

"I am in a way oppressed. Politicians like me are oppressed. If you think that in order to stay in a job, you must print

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rotten things, create trouble, then you are living on the blood of others.

"The Press has its personal judgment but I represent the judgment of the majority of the people. I have to go to them."

Asked if this meant that there must be no dissent, Dr Mahathir said: "Dissent there must be. I believe there must be dissent otherwise society will just stagnate.

"What I am concerned is that when there is no wrong done, why must you present certain things in the wrong light."

He gave as an example the plight of fishermen who were poor but very little was being done to improve their lot.

He said that when newspapers reported things in favour of the Government "they may sound like Government propagandists. But if what you are saying is true, why are you afraid?"

Dr Mahathir said that when the Governor of Bank Negara resigned there were "suggestions of me making money. It was not said directly but there were innuendoes..."

"I have no means of fighting these things. That is why I say I am an oppressed person. These things are published all over the world. I am favouring certain people...let's see the proof of what I have done. Sure I have a lot of people around me...that is my job. If I cut myself off, then what good is there to be the Prime Minister.

"I have to see people and try and help them solve their problems...what is wrong with that.

"But by innuendoes these things are published worldwide to suggest that somehow or other I am helping my colleagues in making money. And there is this vague implication that I am making money for myself. I can't say anything to defend myself.