

# PM: I'm the oppressed one

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25 MAR 1985

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad quipped today that he was the "oppressed one" when it came to newspapers.

"There appears to be no freedom of the Press when it comes to me. Not all I say is printed in the newspapers.

"And when I make a speech where I want something to be emphasised, the Press takes something else and highlights that.

"Headlines are written about this aspect and it is made worse by the fact that we have some people in this country who only read the headlines and don't read what is written," he said.

The Prime Minister was speaking to reporters after chairing the Barisan Nasional Supreme Council meeting here today.

He also pointed out that there was no such thing as a

"free" Press anywhere in the world.

"The Press everywhere is controlled, sometimes by the owners, sometimes by the unions, sometimes by the sub-editors and sometimes by the Government.

"If I want something out in Time magazine, the editors there don't publish it.

"Here, in this country, control of the Press is in the hands of everyone — by you all, reporters, journalists, sub-editors and editors and the Government.

"Whatever I say, it is you all who decide what to print and what not to print and what to highlight and what not to highlight.

"But we will not allow a few who want to control the Press to do so at the expense of the majority," he stressed.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, hit out at Opposition parties which he

said had no compunction in pushing racial issues.

"Opposition parties are not committed to national unity. They are racial and care only about their own race. They have no compunction in playing up racial issues," he said.

"Unfortunately, some Barisan component parties, in replying, also become racial. It is not their wish but in replying to the Opposition, they may appear to have contributed towards racialism.

"There are leaders and there are followers. We can only do so much but we cannot shut people up. They are bound to react (to opposition claims).

"It is easy to provoke certain people to make racialist statements.

"But these statements will be restricted to only one place unless they are published and then it be-

comes a national problem.

"The objective of opposition parties is to force Barisan component parties to make racialist statements to disrupt Barisan unity and then capitalise on the situation," he said.

He pointed out that despite this, the Barisan coalition had been working well and had the support of the people.

"Of course, in any group, especially a large one like the Barisan, there are some differences of opinion. But this happens everywhere.

"The point is that we are in agreement more often than in disagreement. The differences are few but they are highlighted in the Press.

"And also, not all of us present our views the same way.

"I may say it one way and Datuk Musa another but we support what is said, even

by Datuk S. Samy Vellu.

"The difference between us and the Opposition is that we can work together while they cannot," he said.

He was then asked why Umno leaders appear to sound more like national leaders and whether he was concerned that other Barisan party leaders seemed to sound as just representatives of their communities.

"Although Umno has always been a national party rather than a Malay party, even Umno Ministers have to give due weight to the fact that they largely represent the Malays."

Dr Mahathir also urged newspapers tagged as *government gazettes* not to be concerned with such labels.

"What is wrong with being given such tags as long as you publish the truth? That is the most important thing, to publish the truth," he said.