

U E785 AAE
MAHATHIR-PRESS

85
KUALA LUMPUR, MARCH 24 (BERNAMA) -- DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD, CONCERNED THAT CERTAIN NEWSPAPERS HAVE BEEN ABUSING THE LIBERTY GIVEN TO THEM SINCE HE TOOK OFFICE, SAID TODAY HE WAS +RETHINKING ABOUT BEING LIBERAL+ TO THE PRESS IN THE COUNTRY.

THE PRIME MINISTER REGRETTED THAT THE LIBERTY GRANTED TO THE NEWSPAPERS SINCE HE ASSUMED OFFICE IN 1981 DID NOT SEEM TO BE APPRECIATED BY +THOSE WHO WANT TO MISUSE THIS LIBERALISM.+

+I HAVE BEGUN RETHINKING ABOUT BEING LIBERAL. IN ABUSING THE LIBERTY OF THE PRESS, THERE ARE SOME WHO HIDE BEHIND OTHERS WITH THE HOPE OF GETTING AWAY WITH WHAT THEY SAY,+ DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR, WHO IS ALSO BARISAN NASIONAL CHAIRMAN, TOLD REPORTERS AFTER CHAIRING THE BN SUPREME COUNCIL MEETING HERE.

HE BLAMED CERTAIN NEWSPAPERS FOR GENERATING WHAT HE TERMED AS ORDINARY MATTERS INTO CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES WHICH CONTRIBUTED TO TRENDS TOWARD CHAUVINISM, EXTREMISM AND RACIALISM IN THE COUNTRY.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR DREW ATTENTION TO THE FACT THAT WHEN HE BECAME PRIME MINISTER, ONE OF THE THINGS HE WANTED TO DO WAS TO BECOME TRULY LIBERAL WITH THE NEWSPAPERS. -- MORE

1829MST 24 03 85

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U E789 AAE
MAHATHIR-PRESS 2 KUALA LUMPUR

HE SAID HIS DESIRE FOR GREATER FREEDOM OF THE PRESS LED TO THE GRANTING OF MORE KDN LICENCES (FOR PUBLICATIONS) IN THE LAST THREE YEARS THAN THE 20 YEARS BEFORE THAT.

+ANYONE WHO WANTS TO PUBLISH NEWSPAPERS ARE ALLOWED TO DO SO. BUT, UNFORTUNATELY, BEING LIBERAL DOES NOT SEEM TO BE APPRECIATED BY THOSE WHO WANT TO MISUSE THAT LIBERALISM,+ HE LAMENTED.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THAT DESPITE GIVING LIBERTY TO THE PRESS, HE HIMSELF WAS NOT ENJOYING FREEDOM OF THE PRESS BECAUSE CERTAIN NEWSPAPERS DECIDED TO CENSOR HIS SPEECHES.

+I AM BEING OPPRESSED BY THE PRESS,+ HE SAID DURING THE 30-MINUTE PRESS CONFERENCE, CITING INSTANCES WHERE CERTAIN THINGS IN HIS SPEECHES HE WOULD LIKE TO BE EMPHASISED WERE BLACKED OUT AND OTHER ANGLES HIGHLIGHTED SO MUCH SO THE PUBLIC GOT A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT IMPRESSION OF HIM.

+YOUR EDITORS ARE THE ONES HAVING THE FREEDOM, YOU ALL CHOOSE WHAT TO PUBLISH. IN THAT PROCESS, SOMETIMES YOU MAKE ME UNPOPULAR,+ HE SAID. -- MORE

1843MST 24 03 85

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U E799 AAE
MAHATHIR-PRESS 3 KUALA LUMPUR

HE WAS ALSO ANGRY WITH SOME FOREIGN PAPERS AND MAGAZINES. ONE OF THEM, HE SAID, IN A REPORT ON THE RESIGNATION OF THE BANK NEGARA GOVERNOR MADE INNUENDOES THAT HE HAD BEEN MAKING MONEY ILLEGALLY, THAT HE WAS CORRUPTED AND THAT HE WAS FAVOURING CERTAIN PEOPLE.

+THAT REPORT, WHICH IMPLIED THAT I AM MAKING MONEY FOR MYSELF, HAS BEEN CARRIED WORLDWIDE AND I HAVE NO MEANS OF DEFENDING MYSELF. THAT IS WHY I SAID I AM BEING OPPRESSED.+

HE SAID THE REPORT SUGGESTED THAT HE WAS A CORRUPT PRIME MINISTER OF A CORRUPT COUNTRY, ADDING THAT THIS HAD NOT ONLY +SMUDGED MY NAME BUT ALSO THAT OF MY COUNTRY.+

THE PRIME MINISTER ALSO HIT OUT AN ISLAMIC MAGAZINE WHICH HE DESCRIBED AS BEING INFLUENCED BY ZIONISM FOR PUBLISHING AN ARTICLE CLAIMING THAT ISLAMISATION IN MALAYSIA MEANT THE BANNING OF ISLAMIC PARTIES. -- MORE

1908MST 24 03 85

U 5803 AAE
MAHATHIR-PRESS 4 KUALA LUMPUR

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR ASKED LOCAL NEWSPAPERS TO HELP THE GOVERNMENT BRING ABOUT GREATER RACIAL UNITY AMONG THE PEOPLE, STRESSING THAT THERE WERE OTHER MORE IMPORTANT THINGS THAN SENSATIONALISING ISSUES TO SELL NEWSPAPERS.

+CONSIDER IT YOUR PATRIOTIC DUTY TO HELP US. THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT CARE ABOUT FOREIGN OPINION ABOUT US. WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO US IS THAT THIS COUNTRY REMAINS STABLE, THAT THERE WILL NOT BE A REPEAT OF THE 1969 RACIAL CLASHES, THAT OUR ECONOMY WILL CONTINUE TO GROW AND THAT THE POLITICAL SITUATION REMAINS STABLE,+ HE ADDED.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR ALSO HAD A MESSAGE FOR THOSE WHO HE SAID WERE WILLING TO SEEK THE HELP OF FOREIGN NEWSPAPERS TO RUN DOWN MALAYSIA: +GO ON. YOU CAN TELL ALL KINDS OF STORIES ABOUT US NOT BEING LIBERAL. I COULD NOT CARE LESS.+

HE ALSO SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT, BEING ELECTED BY THE PEOPLE, WAS ACCOUNTABLE TO THE PEOPLE AND AS SUCH ITS MAJOR RESPONSIBILITY WAS TO THE PEOPLE, TO ENSURE THAT THE PEOPLE HAD A GOOD LIFE AND THAT DEVELOPMENT GREW AT A FASTER RATE.

+I CANNOT GO ON FOR ANOTHER FIVE YEARS WITHOUT HAVING TO FACE A LOT OF CRITICISMS AND IN A WAY YOU HAVE HELPED TO MAKE ME UNPOPULAR,+ HE SAID. -- MORE

1926MST 24 03 85

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U E804 ABE
MAHATHIR-PRESS 5 KUALA LUMPUR

+IF YOU THINK YOU HAVE A JOB TO DO AS NEWSPAPERMEN, THEN I TOO HAVE MY JOB TO DO AS PRIME MINISTER,+ HE ADDED.

ON THE ROLE HE EXPECTED THE PRESS TO PLAY, HE SAID CONTROLLERS, EDITORS, SUB-EDITORS AND REPORTERS ALL HAD A PART IN THE CREATION OF A STABLE SOCIETY, DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATION AND THE COUNTRY'S CONTINUED WELLBEING.

+WE SHOULD BE ON PAR IF ONLY EDITORS TOO HAVE TO STAND FOR ELECTION AND LET THE WHOLE COUNTRY VOTE FOR THEM. IT IS ONLY FAIR THAT WAY.+

ASKED HOW THE PRESS SHOULD RECONCILE ITSELF TO THE ROLE OF BEING THE NATION'S CONSCIENCE AND THAT OF BEING GOVERNMENT PROPAGANDISTS, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID HE SAW NOTHING WRONG IN BECOMING GOVERNMENT PROPAGANDISTS WHEN JOURNALISTS WERE REPORTING THE TRUTH ABOUT THE COUNTRY.

+WHY ARE YOU SO AFRAID OF BEING BRANDED GOVERNMENT PROPAGANDISTS? EVEN IF YOUR REPORTS READ LIKE GOVERNMENT PROPAGANDA, WHAT IS WRONG WITH THAT WHEN IT IS THE TRUTH?+ HE ASKED. -- BERNAMA
1933MST 24 03 85