

PM: It's an attempt to blacken our name

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(P)
KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — An *Asian Wall Street Journal* article on the United Malayan Banking Corporation (UMBC) deal "looks like a deliberate attempt to blacken the name of Malaysia," Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight.

"It is not correct. It is typical of the *Asian Wall Street Journal* in never printing facts but twisting them."

He said it was "strange" that the article should come out at this particular time. He did not elaborate.

The article traced the alleged acquisition of the UMBC bank by Encik Daim Zainuddin before he became Finance Minister in July 1984.

Dr Mahathir said the approval of the UMBC deal was made after Encik Daim's appointment.

"If it was before he (Encik Daim) became Finance Minister, then approval would have come from his predecessor (Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah).

"Because the deal was made after Encik Daim's appointment, approval came from the Cabinet," Dr Mahathir said.

The article was obviously directed against Malaysia, he told reporters after inspecting the *Astaka* at the Putra World Trade Centre

where the International Quran-Reading Competition will be held.

Asked if he thought that the article was directed at him, Dr Mahathir said: "Obviously you can't hit out at my Cabinet without hitting out at me as well. I am in the line of fire.

"The article was directed at Malaysia, at the Government, at me, at Encik Daim, as far as I can see," he said.

Would he then stop more of such articles from being published?

"What can I do? I can't do anything ... that's their right to publish lies.

"It (the article) is not correct, so it must be a lie," Dr Mahathir said.

He said the article did not say who approved the deal.

"I am quite sure that if they know so much they would have known everything.

"But the ones that would clarify the picture were purposely not put in. It is lies by omission, lies by commission," he added.

On other matters, Dr Mahathir said that no decision had been made on when the Umno Supreme Council and the Barisan Nasional Supreme Council meetings would be held.

On the *Astaka* for the Quran-reading competition, he said he was satisfied with the arrangements because the place was air-conditioned and covered.

If this year's competition turned out well, future com-

petitions would also be held at the trade centre, he added.

The *Astaka* cost \$45,000 to build. Thirty-four countries will be taking part in the competition which begins on Saturday.