

Rumours of resignation irresponsible: Mahathir

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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. — Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad tonight described a Press report that he would step down as Prime Minister as irresponsible and aimed at sabotaging the country's economy.

He said the rumours that he would retire on Aug. 28 would only create tension and restlessness besides adversely affecting the country's business climate.

Dr Mahathir said such reports showed that those in power in the newspaper concerned did not deserve such a powerful position.

Speaking at a presentation of journalism awards organised by

the Malaysian Press Institute here, the Prime Minister stressed the need for the Press to be controlled by responsible people.

He reminded the Press to always play their role responsibly for the benefit of the country.

"If benefit can be achieved by toppling a Government, then the Press should contribute towards this end.

"However, before it joins any effort to oust the Government, it must find out whether the Government that will take over will be better.

"History has shown that often the revolutionary Governments

which took over were worse and even more cruel than the ousted ones.

"If we are not sure that a new Government can perform better, it is better that we do not deliberately run down or obstruct efforts of the existing Government."

He said the Press, with its strong influence, should make constructive criticisms.

"More benefit can be derived from constructive criticism than mere cynicism and criticising for the sake of criticising," he added.

The Prime Minister said now that the general election was over, the Government needed all

the energy, ideas and (limited) money it had to overcome a number of major problems.

If every effort made by the Government was interrupted by destructive criticism or misinterpreted, it would not be able to achieve the success it desired.

Ultimately, it would be the people and the country which would suffer the adverse consequences.

"This is not an appeal from me. Neither is this a threat. This is my own personal opinion, emerging from my sadness over some Press in the country which are carried away by the Western trend of freedom of the Press to the extent

★ TURN TO P2, COL 10

Press has major role

to play

★ FROM PAGE ONE
EST. 21 AUG 1966

that they do not care about the adverse effects in their own country," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the increasing newspaper circulation was partly due to the country's economic growth and stability.

He said newspapers which are influential should not merely think of making money to the extent that it threatened national security, adding that this was where the wisdom of those in control of the newspapers counted.

"Perhaps, deviations by the Government have to be exposed in the interests of the country.

"However, the truth of such matters must first be determined, especially if the exposure can worsen the country's situation," he said.

The Prime Minister also answered calls by certain groups that the Government should refrain from imposing regulations which impede the people's freedom.

"Actually, the Government does not like to regulate the people because it realises the more regulations it makes, the heavier its burden will be.

"Unfortunately, many of those who are supposed to be honest and responsible are dishonest and irresponsible," he said.

These people misused whatever power they had and this had resulted in money from banks, co-operative societies, company shares and business permits being easily and constantly misappropriated.

Regulations

Mincing no words, Dr Mahathir hit out at these irresponsible people, saying that because of them other people had become victims.

"I believe that if we practise widespread deregulation in the country, there will be chaos.

"Therefore, if there are some regulations imposed, including those on the newspapers, it is better that we accept them and adjust ourselves to the requirements," he said.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia had the capability to become a developed country. It also had the potential for ruin and only the people could determine which they wanted to prevail.

He said the future of the country and the people did not entirely depend on the Government.

"Everybody has a role to play and in this modern era, the Press certainly plays a major role," he said.