

# Mahathir: It amounts to economic sabotage

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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has described the reporting of rumours that can create tension and uneasiness in the country as "economic sabotage."

As an example, the Prime Minister cited a recent report that a "high-ranking official" would retire soon.

He said the report, in a Chinese newspaper, was based on rumours that he would be stepping down on Aug 28.

"Such news reports cause tension and uneasiness among the people and affect the trade climate. Reporting such rumours is an act of economic sabotage on a nation which is in the midst of a recession.

"It is an irresponsible act and shows that the people in power in the newspaper concerned are not fit to be given so much power," he said at the annual Press Night at a hotel here.

He added that rumours among stockbrokers has it that he would step down as Prime Minister and the Cabinet had agreed to three conditions.

They were that there would be no prosecution against him, that Works Minister Datuk S. Samy Vellu will not be sacked from the Cabinet and that the Genting and Kuala Lum-

pur houses owned by him (Dr Mahathir), worth \$24 million, would be given to him.

Dr Mahathir said that of late, a popular theme in public discussion among certain quarters was that of "deregulation."

"The Government is urged not to impose all kinds of regulations that hinder the people's freedom.

"In reality, the Government does not wish to 'regulate' our society because more regulation means a heavier burden for the Government."

He added: "Unfortunately, many of those who should be honest and responsible are found to be dishonest and irresponsible. They abuse whatever power they have.

"Because of this, funds of banks and co-operatives, shares of companies, trade permits and other such things are easily and often abused. Because of these people, others are made victims.

"I believe that there will be chaos if we practise deregulation widely in this country. So, if there are some rules and regulations — including in the Press — it is better if we accept these and get used to them."