

We will not bow: Mahathir

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NEW YORK, Wed. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad gave notice yesterday that he will not bow to "scurrilous and tendentious" articles on Malaysia appearing in the foreign Press.

He said: "We are a small country, but we will not bow... we will not be bludgeoned into submission even if we suffer.

"We will stand and fight... we will fight all the way."

The Prime Minister made this statement in the face of almost daily reports in the American Press, particularly in

From LIM THOW BOON

the Wall Street Journal, criticising Malaysia for expelling two journalists of the Asian edition of the WSJ.

He told a luncheon meeting with American bankers and businessmen at the Waldorf Astoria hotel that Malaysia had put up with scurrilous and tendentious articles in the foreign Press.

He said the Government had been liberal with the Press, both local and foreign, compared with other countries.

Yet, it had to put up with slanted articles which bore no relationship with the facts.

"We don't understand why this is so," he commented. "Some people say it is because of my bluntness... because I tell people what I think of them. This is an

unfortunate characteristic of a Prime Minister."

Dr Mahathir said such articles appeared when some events or meetings were taking place which might affect Malaysia's economy.

When the Asian Development Bank had its meeting in Manila recently, an article was published accusing the Finance Minister of all kinds of crime without substantiation.

Another article appeared when the International Monetary Fund was meeting in Washington.

He said this time the WSJ excelled itself by vilifying not only the Finance Minister but also the Prime Minister.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia is a developing nation. It is a multi-racial country where half the population is made up of indigenous people, 38 per cent Chinese and 10 per cent Indians.

Reality

It is thus very difficult for Americans to understand its problems.

Nevertheless, since independence in 1957, Malaysia has managed quite well. It had consistently achieved growth rates exceeding other countries until 1982.

This growth was achieved because there was stability. Many countries better endowed with resources did not fare as well because they were not stable.

Malaysia has managed to cement the relationship between the races. It has been referred to by some as one of the "little dragons" of South-East Asia, while others regard it as a newly-industrialised country.

"But if you read the reports in the Wall Street Journal or other newspapers, you would wonder how a country beset by so many problems could succeed," Dr Mahathir said.

"You would think it is a dangerous place to go to and won't put your money in it.

"The reality is that Malaysia is stable. The economy is strong, the

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Let's have facts, says

Dr M

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people live well. You won't find so many Mercedes taxis..."

Replying to a question from a representative of Dow Jones, which is one of the owners of the WSJ, he said the publicity over the expulsion of the journalists would have a negative effect on his efforts to attract investments to Malaysia.

This was what the WSJ wanted to do, he added.

Replying to a question on why the Government, if it had wanted to acquire shares in the United Malayan Banking Corporation, had not done so two years ago when prices were lower, Dr Mahathir retorted: "This is the kind of question we expect. Who said the Government wanted to buy shares in UMBC?"

Negative

He said some people were bent on writing negative reports on Malaysia.

"If we sell and the prices are low we have one kind of stories. If we sell and prices are high, we have another kind of stories."

He said attempts were made to suggest that those running the country were not capable of doing so.

"There would appear to be many journalists more capable of running Malaysia..."

He said if there is corruption in Malaysia, "let us have the facts. Let us investigate."

The WSJ is read worldwide and the people are going to assume that Malaysia's policies are all wrong, he added.