

Press freedom: Why there must be a limit

27108
11 MAR 1985

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — There has to be a limit to Press freedom because Malaysia is a developing country, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight.

"We are a developing country and we cannot afford to have chaos. Newspapers have to study the negative repercussions before publishing any report. If newspapers are not mature in their reporting, we will suffer very serious setbacks.

"I have faith in our newspapers and journalists, they have common-sense and their thinking are rational. Even though there is no clear-cut black and

white outline on the freedom of the Press, they have maturity in reporting," the Prime Minister said during a question and answer session with journalists at the Press Night dinner.

Dr Mahathir also urged newspapers not to emulate Western values as we had our own. Therefore Press freedom in this country had to be based on our own values.

He also asked Malaysians to be calm in facing the recession, and added that if the country had no money, the people would have to learn how to be thrifty.

"If our income is low we have to be

careful in our spending, and if we are poor we have to behave like one. But we must not succumb to our present economic recession and we must be resilient in order to survive."

"Take the May 13 incident. When that happened, every newspaper in the world announced that democracy in Malaysia was dead and racial war will be rampant.

"But we have proved them wrong by bringing the Malaysian economy to world standard, and increasing development. How was that possible? Because we have faith in the country," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the media could help play a positive role in solving the country's problems. He urged local journalists not to run down the country.

"Distaste for a person or group should not make us take it out of our own country. However, we are a free people and if anyone wishes to denigrate his own country, it is his right.

"But I am glad that Malaysian journalists by and large are free from these traits," he said.

The Prime Minister also said the resignation of Datuk Musa Hitam from the Cabinet and Umno was not a

major crisis in the Government

He said even Datuk Musa had admitted that his resignation was not a major crisis.

"The question of Datuk Musa's resignation is a party concern since the position was created by the party, and he was appointed by party members. Dr Mahathir also said that the credibility of the Government would not be affected.

"I would like to stress here that the term 2M was not created by me, in fact it was created by the Press. The question of the credibility of the Government does not exist at all."