

Allegations against Dr M over Limbang retracted

The Review says sorry

MAY 28
KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. —
The Far Eastern Economic Review has apologised to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for any embarrassment caused by a report in its May 21 issue on the purported sale of Limbang in north-east Sarawak to Brunei.

It also retracted all allegations made against Dr Mahathir under its 'Intelligence Column'.

The retraction and apology will be published in the May 28 issue.

The report had claimed that Dr Mahathir had raised the possible sale of Limbang to Brunei for US\$6 billion (about M\$15 billion) in his private talks with the Sultan while on a two-day official visit to the Sultanate in March.

The text of the retraction, made available by its Kuala Lumpur bureau, said: "We are assured that the Prime Minister has personally denied that the subject of Limbang was ever mentioned.

By SABRY SHARIF

"The *Review* unreservedly and completely accepts these assurances, retracts its report and offers its sincere apologies for any embarrassment the item may have caused the Prime Minister."

The *Review* said the report was published in "good faith from sources which in the past had proved to be both well-informed and reliable".

The Hong Kong-based magazine

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said the report was published "as what appeared to be an interesting and, indeed, positive example of further co-operation between Malaysia and Brunei, following recent agreements which involved Brunei acquiring a share of the ownership of the Malaysian Airline System and the use of airspace over Limbang.

"Any agreement, consistent with both countries' national pride and

their territorial sovereignty, entered into freely as equals, which promised to end a territorial dispute between two fraternal members of Asean, seemed to the *Review's* editors to be both desirable and newsworthy."

The *Review* said that it "could not accept allegations made by certain parties that the publication of such an item was in any way motivated by maliciousness or that it was intended in any way to be defamatory".

"That said, however, the *Review* repeats its full retraction and apologies for the item."

The *Review* report on Limbang had triggered calls from various Malaysian organisations, political and social, to sue the magazine if it did not retract and apologise for the story and to ban its circulation here.

The Home Affairs Ministry was also urged to investigate the source of the story, as it could jeopardise relations between Brunei and Malaysia and Sarawak and the Federal Governments.