

Journal's coverage set to improve

(P) Mahathir - oversea trips

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From AHMAD A. TALIB

NEW YORK, Sun. — A new, more balanced and fair, relationship is about to emerge between Malaysia and the *Wall Street Journal*, one of the biggest newspapers in the US.

Malaysia can look forward to the newspaper's coverage of domestic events with a perspective that would more accurately reflect the existing environment and situation.

This understanding came about after Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad agreed to meet editors and senior executives of the journal here last Friday. The editors had sought to meet Dr Mahathir to get a more accurate perspective of Malaysian social, political and economic development.

The journal's coverage of Asia is basically contained in its regional issue of the

same name with Hong Kong as its regional office.

It is learnt that the editors had acknowledged Malaysia's economic recovery contrary to what the newspaper had once predicted not so long ago. The editors, it is learnt, came out from the meeting quite impressed with Dr Mahathir's elaboration on the situation in Malaysia.

The editors were quick to point out that "even at the worst of times," Malaysia had not sought to curb its distribution and circulation in the country, as is the case in some others.

They said the strained relationship had also undergone legal scrutiny. The judiciary's objective look at the court case between the newspaper and the Government was another manifestation of its independence, a point which was not lost on the editors.

The Prime Minister had argued that Malaysia was not campaigning for positive coverage all the time. The Government merely stressed the need for a newspaper of the standing of the *Wall Street Journal* to give a balanced perspective of Malaysia.

Dr Mahathir had articulated that the Government had no intention to curb freedom of the Press but the same principle has to be adhered to when reporting developments in a developing country.

Fair criticism is welcomed, Dr Mahathir had argued with the newspaper, but surely this has to be weighed against some positive elements such as the economic recovery now taking place in the country.

The editors noted that this was "fair comment" from the Prime Minister.

A similar understanding had apparently been made when Dr Mahathir met leading editors of British dailies when he was in London last week.