

'Government acknowledges need for a free Press

# PM: Let's build a stable Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — The Prime Minister tonight said that mediamen must rely on their sense of responsibility, patriotism and self-discipline in deciding the role they should play in ensuring that multiracial Malaysia continues to be free, stable, democratic and progressive.

He said the Government acknowledges the need for a free Press not only as an effective link and channel of communication between the people and the administrators, but also as a guardian of democracy.

While it is one of the pillars of democracy, the free Press must also play its role in ensuring that the people understand the democratic system of the country as many are under the impression that absolute freedom and democracy bring happiness to all.

"What is not fully understood is that democracy too can bring the nation to destruction if is not wisely and responsibly practised," **Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad** said at the annual Malaysian Press Night organised by the Malaysian Press Institute.

Thus, in developing Malaysia the role of the Press is not just to inform but also to educate. Only a free Press can play its role effectively as the watchdog of democracy.

He said without a free Press there would not be feedback from the people and the errors and malpractices of the Government and its servants may continue unchecked. Also, without it the people will not be correctly informed about events around them.

In playing their role in developing Malaysia, the newspapers must not sacrifice truth and stability in order to "scoop" others and be sensational and best-selling.

---

□ A. SAMAD ISMAIL IS TOKOH  
WARTAWAN NEGARA: P3

---

The Prime Minister said the Press has assumed many rights, among them "the right to know" and adopted the Western trend of "investigative reporting" to expose errors of the Government.

With regard to the right to know, he said the Press must realise that some information had to be classified secret for reasons of security and bargaining advantage at negotiating tables, while investigative reporting will only be fair if Government successes are also given publicity.

He said since the May 13 incident in 1969 Malaysia has been stable, "certainly more stable than most developing countries". As in any democracy political conflicts exist.

But the Press should not take it upon itself to play one against the other so as to blow them out of proportion.

Dr Mahathir spoke of the chaos, moral degeneration and erosion of traditional cultural values in countries where the Press was given absolute and unbridled freedom.

He also pointed out the disadvantage of a Government-run or controlled Press. A communist State took 70 years to realise its errors as the controlled Press praised everything the Government did, proving correct what the Nazi Propaganda Minister Goebbels had said that a lie if repeated often enough would finally be accepted as truth.

Dr Mahathir said as a developing and multiracial country Malaysia needs political stability and a strong Government.

"I raise these matters not because I want to end the freedom of the mass media or democracy. There are those who would accuse me of this whenever I say something. Democracy is successfully practised in this country. There is Press freedom. But we should be aware of all possibilities. With this realisation, I believe we can be more responsible in strengthening democracy in Malaysia."