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Mahathir - press

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KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 1 (Bernama) -- Chinese language newspapers deliberately played up news reports touching on race and campaigned for the opposition during the last general election, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said such reports frequently made the front pages of such newspapers and this, indirectly, could influence the thinking of the people, particularly the Chinese community.

The Umno President also rejected the comments of a local Chinese language newspaper editor that news reports in the Chinese press during the general election campaign period reflected the views of the Chinese community.

+I read today the comments of a Chinese editor saying that they only reflected the views of the public. But, newspapers do not only reflect the views... they can also publish reports that can influence, + he told a press conference at the end of the second day of the Umno General assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre here.

He praised the Bahasa Malaysia and English language dailies for being more responsible by not publishing news items which could hurt the feelings of the people, especially the Malays. -- more

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Mahathir - press 2 Kuala Lumpur

He said: +For instance, the Malay and English language newspapers could play up the speeches during this general assembly that can hurt the feelings of the people and touch on the question of race.

+But they did not play this up in their front pages with big headlines. This shows that certain English and Bahasa Malaysia newspapers are more responsible.+

In his policy address yesterday, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir hit out at Chinese news papers for supporting the two-party system advocated by the opposition.

He also said that Chinese news reports which supported and campaigned for the opposition escaped the knowledge of the Commonwealth Observer Group because they were unable to read local Chinese and Tamil newspapers.

As such, the group's report that the major newspapers did not give adequate coverage to the opposition parties was not accurate, he added. -- more

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Mahathir - press 3 Kuala Lumpur

The Prime Minister said the group was also not aware of the unhealthy actions of the opposition such as preventing 300 Barisan Nasional supporters from voting and this was not exposed.

+This was one of the things the Observer Group did not see and, as such, their evaluation did not touch on the activities of the opposition during the election,+ he added.

However, he said that he understood the problems of the group which did not have enough manpower to obtain an overall picture of the conduct of the general election.

On the proceedings so far at the Umno General Assembly, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir felt the debate was of quality with delegates giving concise speeches on the party struggle. -- Bernama

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