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Mahathir-Press

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KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 10, (Bernama) — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today warned of the danger of the press becoming corrupted if it was given absolute power.

The Prime Minister stressed that the power of the free press was so strong that it could make or break a government by influencing the electorate in a democratic country.

He then posed the questions:

+Since the press can wield the power which can make or break governments, is it not possible for it to be corrupted?+

+If there is no criticism of press freedom or the press is permitted unlicensed freedom, then would not the press be said to wield absolute power and would not it then be absolutely corrupted?+

Opening the 23rd International Chinese Newspaper Convention here, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir quoted the saying: +Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely+.

+If the press does not like the government to have absolute power, then by the same token, the press must not wield absolute power in moulding public opinion,+ he said.

The Prime Minister, however, stressed that the press in Malaysia was a free one. — more

♥10/12/14-18MST

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He said: +The fact that the press can say that the press is not free means that it is free. If it is not free, then it will only echo what the government says.

+Paradoxically, therefore, a press is free when it says it is not free and, it is not free when it says that it is free.+

Emphasising the need for the press to be free, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said: +The pen (press) must be free. Any restriction would be considered undemocratic.+

+The press must be free to criticise governments because that is one very important way to stop governments from the misuse of power.+

He said that the Chinese press catered to a very influential minority community in countries in the South East Asia region.

In Malaysia, he added, the Chinese had contributed a lot to the economy and, to a certain extent, it resulted from the role of the Chinese press.

He said that policies adopted by the Malaysian government allowed root cultures of its different races to be preserved and they had not caused racial splits as seen in many other countries.

+Except for the one race riot in 1969, the different races in Malaysia have lived in relative harmony,+ he added.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said in most countries, citizenship required total cultural and linguistic identification with the definitive people of the country. — more

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+A Chinese Australian or a Chinese American or a Chinese Canadian is more Australian or American or Canadian than a Chinese Malaysian or a Malaysian Chinese is Malaysian,+ he said.

He said that Malaysia had practiced racial tolerance and this included the availability of newspapers in languages of different races living here.

Representatives of Chinese newspapers from Singapore, Thailand, the Philipines, Brazil, England, Canada, the United States, South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Malaysia are attending the two-day convention.

The convention would focus on training of journalists. -- Bernama

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