

CNS8234

U GE 07-09 00185 ED580

aae

MAHATHIR SAYS JOURNALISTS ARE NOT EXEMPTED FROM THE LAW-)

Mahathir - journalists 92

XUALA LUMPUR, Sep 7 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today journalists are not considered privileged people, who can have access to government secrets and they should be treated equally under the law.

If journalists were exempted everybody would be using journalists to get access to classified information, the Umno President told a press conference after chairing the party's Supreme Council meeting here today.

+Journalists do not have, special privileges. The law applies to everyone, journalists tidak ada privilege, undany-undany kepada semua pihak. sama rata,+ he said responding to questions of the much-highlighted government's intention to use the Official Secret Act (OSA) over the recent controversy on the City Mall' purchase of some luxury Volvos for its top-ranking officers.

Dr Mahathir said : +If they break the law, we have to take action that is in accordance with the law.+

+We're being very proper in these things, are you asking for privileges,+ he asked. -- more

▼07/09/19-23MST . .

◆
CNS8241
U GE '07-09 00133. ED581

aae

Mahathir - journalists 2 (last). Kuala Lumpur

Dr Mahathir, however, said he was prepared to allow journalists the special privileges if the law permitted them.

+I will agree if the Dewan Rakyat agrees journalists are exempted and can have access to all secrets. If exempted, okay, I'll follow the law, But the law says nobody is exempted,+ he added.

As for now, he said, only those who had permission can have access to government secrets..

+If people are caught stealing information, the law will take its course, + he added.

The Prime Minister had said that the government might use the OSA against officers and journalists responsible for the leakage of information on the City Hall issue. -- more

▼07/09/19-27MST

CNS8252
U GE 07-09 00193 ED582
aae

Mahathir-journalists 3 (last) Kuala Lumpur

According to Dr Mahathir, so far, police had yet to interrogate any journalist related to investigations on the issue.

Responding to questions, the Prime Minister said it was the right of police to interview anybody including journalists.

+As I've said the journalists are not privileged people. They can be questioned,+ he said.

Replying to claims that the Government did not allow press freedom, he said the country also had newspapers which opposed the government and supported opposition parties.

+Certain bodies which oppose the government, have never written any thing good about the government, but we have not prevented them from making such lop-sided reports,+ he said.

He said the newspapers' stand in Malaysia was dictated by the policies of their respective managements.

Saying that Malaysia practised democracy, he said there were certain non-governmental bodies which abused their powers and prevented factual news items from being published in their newspapers.

He said it was a normal thing in a democratic country to have newspapers which supported the government and those which opposed it. --
Bernama