

Dr M regrets irresponsible reporting by certain papers

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By Vijayan Menon and Tengku Sariffuddin

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the government has no quarrel with the British Government, but regretted the irresponsible reporting of certain sections of the British Press which is fond of accusing Malaysian leaders of being corrupt.

The Prime Minister said he could not understand how the British Press could conclude Malaysian leaders as corrupt when the firm it alleged to have given him (Dr Mahathir) US\$50,000 as "earnest money" was unsuccessful in its bid for a construction contract.

Asked by newsmen to comment on an announcement today that the Cabinet had decided to stop giving new contracts to British companies, Dr Mahathir said: "We have no quarrel

with the British government...

"Anyone can come up with such a story. When he fails to get the contract, he becomes angry and accuses me of corruption. We are not people given to taking bribes. The Western media thinks people in the East can be bought over with money."

He added certain sections of the British media still maintained a colonial brain which assumes that people whose mentality are not like theirs (the British media) are all corrupt, and could be corrupted anytime.

"US\$50,000 for the Prime Minister and you can get a contract worth \$1 billion..." Dr Mahathir said in disbelief.

Asked whether the decision would be maintained if the British media changed its ways, Dr Mahathir said that it was up to them. "If they keep on like this, we have no more contracts for

British firms," the Prime Minister said.

Dr Mahathir was speaking to reporters at a Hari Raya gift presentation ceremony here today.

Asked what transpired between him and British High Commissioner Duncan Slater when the two met earlier today, Dr Mahathir said: "Nothing, except that he came to see me hoping to persuade the government from taking this action. But it is too late. We have already decided."

Asked whether British Prime Minister John Major had been in contact with him, Dr Mahathir said that Major had been in contact through the High Commissioner.

Asked what Major had to say about all this, Dr Mahathir said: "He regretted it, of course."

Asked whether the government would make a formal protest over the matter, Dr Mahathir said there was

no need to do so because he felt that a formal protest would not be effective.

Asked if Malaysia was prepared for any possible retaliation, Dr Mahathir said: "Well, we will see..."

Dr Mahathir said some Western countries were fond of using arm-twisting or economic-twisting tactics.

"Some would threaten to withdraw privileges under the Generalised System of Preferences...this we learn from them...which means that if they adopt such tactics, so can we..."

"These countries use economic weapons all the time to force us (developing countries) to become democratic, to respect human rights, to look after the environment..." the Prime Minister said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had tolerated this for a long time. Some quarters

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Report the truth, says Dr M

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said this could be part of the internal politicking in Britain but when this was linked to projects such as the Pergau Dam, Malaysia could not tolerate this anymore.

The Prime Minister said a British company was awarded the Pergau hydroelectric project because Bri-

tain offered concessionary loans for the project. This made the British bid competitive, which in turn would reduce the project's overall costs.

The project was awarded to the British company not out of affection, but because its overall bid was competitive.

Asked what he felt should be done by the British me-

dia, the Prime Minister said: "Report the truth...don't report some concocted story. It's simple...be truthful. This is something that they cannot do because they have never understood what is meant by truth."

Asked if he wanted a public apology, Dr Mahathir said: "I don't want any apology. Apology is not good enough..."