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Mahathir-Major
MAJOR ENTITLED TO SAY ANYTHING, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

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KUALA LUMPUR, March 2 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said British Prime Minister John Major was entitled to say anything pertaining to Malaysia's decision not to award new government contracts to British firms.

"However, I have to check whether his statement was true or just misreported by the media," he said when asked to comment on Major's statement that Malaysia was being short-sighted and unjustified in banning British firms from government contracts in a row over press reporting.

Major was reported to have made the remarks in an interview with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) on his return from a visit to the United States.

Speaking to reporters after breaking fast with 220 orphans at Carcosa Sri Negara here tonight, he said Malaysia knew what it was doing.

"Although Malaysia is not a brilliant country and just a 'banana republic', we know what we are doing.

"So, sometimes we make mistakes but allow us to enjoy the mistakes," he said. -- more

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Mahathir-Major 2 Kuala Lumpur

Dr Mahathir also said he was not going to take any new action until the irresponsible British press had learnt to report the truth.

"I've the power but the power is exercised together with Cabinet members. I'm not going to do anything and my Cabinet is not going to do anything," he said.

He reiterated that Malaysia had nothing against the British government, its businessmen and the British people but Malaysia could not tolerate the kind of lies spread by the British press.

The accusations hurled against him had spread throughout the world and marred his reputation, he said, adding that he had no other means to correct all the lies.

"It's so easy to say other people are corrupt, but what is the proof," he said on a claim that a British construction company, Wimpey Group, had paid US\$50,000 (RM135,000) in bribes in its bid for a contract to build an aluminium smelter.

The Malaysian government had stated that there was no such project. --

Dr Mahathir said that if the Wimpey official confessed he paid bribes then he should be arrested and charged as this would be the only way to prove the allegation.

"This man says he gave US\$50,000 to somebody who purportedly represented me and deposited it in the Swiss Bank. Well, you better charge him," he said.

Asked on the position of British firms which had been awarded government contracts, Dr Mahathir said they would not be affected.

He said the government's decision applied only to new contracts. --

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