

LETTER REJECTED

PM: There is no misunderstanding as claimed by editor

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KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has rejected an explanation by Britain's *Sunday Times* regarding its reports which alleged corruption among Malaysian politicians.

The Prime Minister said there was no misunderstanding over the reports as implied by the newspaper's editor, Andrew Neil, in his letter to his paper's stablemate, *The Times*.

"He regrets that I misunderstand (when) actually there is nothing to misunderstand," he told reporters after chairing an Umno supreme council meeting yesterday.

"It was quite clear (in the reports) that I had received money in order to give a contract to this Wimpey (International).

"If I misunderstand what was written, then a lot of other people throughout the world seem to misunderstand because they have published these remarks about how corrupt we all are."

Dr Mahathir said Neil's letter, a copy of which was passed to the Malaysian High Commissioner in London, implied that he was corrupt and that he could do nothing about it.

Neil, in the letter, said his newspaper had, at no stage, claimed that Dr Mahathir had sought or had been paid a bribe (see story on Page 2).

Dr Mahathir also dismissed taking legal action against the *Sunday Times* for the reports.

"I can't go to the courts in England because then you will publish a lot more about the proceedings, then you will dig up a lot of mud... that's what you do all the time."

Mahathir: British press should stick to the truth

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Expressing his displeasure on reports that he had allegedly received a bribe for an aluminium smelter contract, when there was no such project in the first place, Dr Mahathir said:

"Some crank comes out and make a statement that I received US\$50,000. I mean I'm not that cheap in the first place.

"This is the kind of report that goes all over the world. At last count, we found (the media of) 13 countries printing reports that I am corrupt.

"Now, how do I get rid of that reputation?"

Dr Mahathir said the British press should stick to the truth.

"When you start telling lies to the people, you cause a lot of problem to other people.

"When people get angry

with the British press for telling lies about them, you go back in history and say (the reason for the anger was) that his father was not promoted. This is ridiculous."

Dr Mahathir declined to comment on British Prime Minister John Major's statement that Malaysia's action was short-sighted.

He said Malaysia's quarrel was not with the British Government and similarly, he did not expect the British Government to clamp down on the British press.

On the Pergau hydroelectric project, Dr Mahathir again repeated that there was no aid given by Britain to finance its construction.

"Any government that covers half the cost of the project with a grant must be stupid and I don't think the British Government is

that stupid.

"However, you (the British press) must make it clear that it was a loan and say it was a loan."

Dr Mahathir also dismissed allegations of aid-for-arms deal in the Pergau project.

"But if the British Government say we must not give contracts when negotiating for arms, that is fine by us. We'll give the contracts to someone else."

Dr Mahathir also declined to comment on whether the British Government should intervene with its press to set the records straight.

"I am not going to say what John Major's government should do. If the British press wants to get rid of him, don't ask for my help because I have no interest in British politics," he said.

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