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Mahathir-press

THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PRESS SHOULD COOPERATE IN NATION-BUILDING, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, April 3 (Bernama) -- The cooperation between the government and the press could help the nation achieve the level of development which could earn it the respect of other nations, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight.

"Is there anything wrong if the press and the government were to cooperate in nation-building," he said.

Malaysian journalists need not prove to others that there was press freedom by making criticisms as they like, he said at a dinner organised by the Malaysian Malay Journalists Association (PWM) here.

"Only progress will determine whether or not others will respect us," he said.

Dr Mahathir said: "the duty of the government and journalists is to build the nation...let us not forget that our nation is still a developing nation...we have not yet attain developed nation status."

"In developed nations, the press could determine the rise and fall of presidents like some sort of a journalistic game but we could not afford such a game. We are still serious in developing the nation," he said.

He said that although the Western media often claim that there was no press freedom here, in actual fact they were themselves not free as they were controlled by their editors, owners and advertisers who determined the news articles to be published for their own interests.

Dr Mahathir also expressed confidence that with the close cooperation, young journalists today would be able to witness the progress to be achieved in the year 2020 and the Malaysian race that would be respected by the world.

Among those present were former Deputy Prime Minister Tun Ghafar Baba, Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, Information Minister Datuk Mohamed Rahmat, Youth and Sports Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik, Entrepreneur Development Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed and Umno Youth head Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Tamby Chik.

Dr Mahathir also presented the "Anugerah Wartawan Cemerlang Negara" to Tan Sri A.Samad Ismail, Tan Sri Melan Abdullah, Datuk Dr Usman Awang, Datuk Mazlan Nordin, Encik Harun Hassan and Puan Adibah Amin.

He also launched the World Federation of Muslim Journalists (WFMJ) based here.

The Prime Minister also accepted a joint memorandum containing about 700 signatures of local journalists to protest against the Western media from PWM president Yazid Othman.

Earlier, Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Muhammad Haji Muhammad Taib, who is PWM patron, said that press had an important role to play in developing the minds of the people so that they would be prepared to face the challenges of the future.

He said that journalists should therefore be prepared to initiate changes to ensure that the people could compete with others. -- Bernama

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