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Counter negative reports by doing the right things: Musa

Fadzil Ghazali

MALAYSIA should concentrate on "doing the right things" instead of being overly concerned over the Western media's negative criticisms, Special Envoy of the Prime Minister to Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group, Tan Sri Musa Hitam, said yesterday.

The former deputy prime minister, who is also the Malaysian Delegate to the UN Commission on Human Rights, said even if the Western media and foreign elements are conspiring against Malaysia, "We should admit it, recognise it as a fact of life and then look at ourselves and concentrate on what action plans we have got to put the country on a stronger footing."

Speaking to reporters in Kuala Lumpur after delivering a keynote address at the Asean Congress on Media Laws and Policies, Musa said Malaysia has to accept that the Western media are strong and very influential.

"But the way to counter it is not by demonstration or condemnation, but by doing things right. If we do it right as we did in the past, they will not be criticising us. They will be praising us. Do not over-react," he added.

He noted that foreign media treatment towards Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and the leaders of other countries in the region is not something new.

"Many of them offer criticisms, and the criticisms in many respects are unjustified, and in some respect require close examination. Malaysians need to look at it that way.

"One need not share the criticisms of those foreign media, but then one also has to accept the fact that an attack on Dr Mahathir is indeed an attack on Malaysia as a whole and the system.

"I think we need to rationalise it in that manner. One should never allow a leader of one's own country to be attacked, but one has to differentiate between attacks and constructive criticism or criticism aimed at destruction," he added.

Musa said the negative criticisms have to be handled in a very calm manner to reduce its potential of further aggravating the situation.

While it is very demoralising to have one's leadership attacked or criticised, one has to face it, he added.

He said in the era of a shrinking global village, nobody can escape the attention or the possibility of becoming a target anywhere in the world, because whatever a country does affects the others.

On media development in Asean (Association of South-East Asian nations), Musa said there appears to be a process of liberalisation where freedom of the press is concerned.

He noted that this is because Asean has been somewhat successful in providing education to the masses, as well as the advancement of information technology in the region.

He added that the region should have sufficient confidence that their population will be able to pass fair judgement on information that is available to them.

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