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Mahathir-Press

PM EXPECTS THE PRESS TO BE FAIR IN THEIR REPORTING

GURUN, May 12 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he expects the press to be fair in their reporting, without taking sides when highlighting issues.

"I expect the press to more fair. I'm not saying the press is taking sides (but) I'm saying you are not being fair," he said when asked by reporters to justify his criticism on the Malaysian media for being unsupportive of the government.

He was speaking at a news conference at the Perwaja Steel Sdn Bhd Complex here after opening the company's beam and section mill, which has the capability of producing 700,000 tonnes of steel beams, channels and angles, a year.

He again cited as an example press reports following the High Court conviction of DAP deputy secretary-general Lim Guan Eng.

The Member of Parliament for Kota Melaka was found guilty and fined RM15,000 by the Melaka High Court on charges of sedition and maliciously making a false publication.

At a news conference after the Umno Supreme Council meeting in Kuala Lumpur on Saturday, Dr Mahathir rapped the media for giving excessive coverage on Guan Eng's issue, to a certain extent implying that the government was being undemocratic and that it has control over the courts.

Today, he said: "Our view is that we have been losing cases in the courts...much more serious cases yet there was no reaction the way the press, especially the foreign press, reacted to Guan Eng's cases of being fined more than RM2,000."

Dr Mahathir said he was sad when certain quarters insinuated that the government was being undemocratic and that it has the courts under its control.

"In our case (Umno), we were declared an illegal party...a party which has formed the government has been declared illegal (which) never happen in the history of demoractic politics anywhere in the world. Yet it happened to us.

"Yet people keep on accusing us of fiddling with the courts and doing all kinds of funny things," he said.

He said there was also accusations that the Attorney-General was bias in favour of the government.

But, Dr Mahathir said, if the AG was biased, why would he take to court Barisan Nasional candidates who have won their seats only to be declared otherwise.

When asked whether his remarks about the media would encourage foreign press to further accuse the government of controlling the local media, Dr Mahathir said without him saying that, the government would still be criticised.

"We will be critised anyway but we must have our say. Nothing we do is ever right," he added.

When asked if he was disappointed with the local press, the Prime Minister said to a certain degree, he was.

"I won't say I was disappointed completely but certainly I was with the foreign press. There is a need for better judgment and better reporting on the part of the local press," he added.

When asked why other party leaders did not react to Guan Eng's case, Dr Mahathir said they had but statements issued by these leaders were not

published by the press.

"That was their complaint to me...that unless the Prime Minister makes a statement, the press just ignores us (them)," he said. -- BERNAMA

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