

BE FAIR,

‘One-sided, distorted reports also a form of power abuse’

By JACQUELINE ANN SURIN

KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has asked the international media to be fair, balanced and factual because it wields immense power.

The Prime Minister said while the media could be a force for common good, it could also misuse its power and fabricate unflattering stories about governments.

“The media is powerful, in most cases more powerful than governments and politicians like me. You can make or break anyone or anything,” he said.

“Such power is frightening,” he said when opening the four-day Commonwealth Press Union biennial conference yesterday.

Quoting an excerpt from Jeffrey Archer’s novel *The Eleventh Commandment*, Dr Mahathir said the media could play a crucial role in ensuring justice was done and miscreants prevented from abusing their power.

“Unfortunately, the media itself is often tempted to misuse power,” he said.

He said Malaysia faced the same problem with the media as US President Bill Clinton, who had to cope

with the issue of his affair with Monica Lewinsky and his impeachment.

“We have a serious political problem made more serious by the manner (in which) the problem is being presented to the whole world by the all-powerful international media,” Dr Mahathir said.

He said the international media sensed an “enduring scoop” when Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim “refused to go quietly and be tried in the normal manner.”

“After all, this is one of those backward Asian countries whose understanding of justice and fair play is quite limited.

“This particular country had in the past dared to challenge the West and its media, its values and its economic and financial theories and practices.

“I cannot help but feel that the international, or more precisely, the Western media would like to teach Malaysia a lesson, to pull it down a few pegs more,” he said.

He said Malaysia had never had good press despite its achievements but “a failure of any kind makes good copy.”

He said the impression given all over the world by the international media was that Malaysia was **perpetu-**

● TURN TO PAGE TWO

SAYS PM

Mahathir:
Media
licensing
necessary

527 10 98
● FROM PAGE ONE

ally in turmoil and police brutality was a daily or even hourly occurrence.

“I am not asking that the media report only the good things. I am asking that the media be fair, be balanced, be factual,” he said, adding that the media must not advocate undemocratic overthrow of democratically elected governments.

He said the media was guilty of reporting only the views of government opponents without giving the Government’s side.

“In fact, they distort reports about the Government and go so far as to fabricate unflattering stories about the Government,” he said.

Later, Dr Mahathir said there was a need for media licensing to ensure that the Government has the “capacity to put a stop to things if things get out of hand.”

“We believe in press freedom but like currency traders, if there are no rules and regulations, there will be abuse of power.”