

# PM: Don't sensationalise<sup>4/</sup>

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## Media slammed for reports on KLIA's woes

By WAN HAMIDIHAMID

KUALA LUMPUR: Reports on the KL International Airport's technical glitches have been blown out of proportion by the local media, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

The Prime Minister said the media were more interested in selling news than to help the nation.

He said airports in foreign countries also encountered similar, or even worse, problems when they opened.

"In the United States, there was an international airport which was not operational at all when its technical system was faulty but the local media are more interested in highlighting negative issues about our country," he said at the presentation of the excellent service awards to the staff of the Prime Minister's Department here yesterday.

On Thursday, *The Star's* article on the importance of teamwork to operate KLIA reported that Chicago's O'Hare International Airport, the busiest in the world handling 69.1 million passengers in 1996, was hit by computer malfunction for days.

It is also understood that the 100% completed airports in Narita and Kansai, Japan, also faced first-day blues like the KLIA.

Reminding the local media on their role to help the nation overcome the economic downturn, Dr Mahathir said the publishers and editors seemed to be more interested in selling their news.

"I am sad because the media

are supposed to help us. But they like to criticise us and they report negatively," he said.

The Prime Minister said the local media, too, had questioned the Government's efforts in setting up funds to help the people, as the press alleged such funds were to be used to aid certain individuals.

"As if we set up funds worth billions of ringgit only to help certain people. This (attitude) will surely not help us to overcome the nation's problems," he added.

Speaking to reporters, Dr Mahathir said raising funds would not be a problem to the Government which would get them from either local or foreign sources.

He said some soft loans could be obtained from the federal government but ordinary com-

mercial loans would be applied for abroad, unless there were countries wanting to help Malaysia.

"We have obtained loans from Japan for a few projects and the rest we will borrow from the market," he said, adding that the loans would be obtained within the limit of the Government's capacity.

The Prime Minister also said the Infrastructure Development Fund launched on Wednesday would not be for the Multimedia Super Corridor project alone but all infrastructural ventures.

He said infrastructural development such as building roads, providing amenities like electricity and water was given priority because it would provide a spin-off effect for more than 140 industries in the country.

On US Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin's surprise over Dr Mahathir's statement that he had agreed that high interest rates could hurt the economy, the Prime Minister said:

"Well I don't know. I'm surprised also that he's surprised but that is the impression I got. Whatever it is, our view is that we should have lower interest rates if we do not want to kill our business people.

"But if he says he didn't say it, okay. It is not a problem for us because we are not asking for support. That (the lowering of interest rates) is our decision."

Dr Mahathir had said Rubin expressed the view when he met Special Functions Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin on Sunday but Rubin later was quoted as saying he did not make such statement.