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Foreign leaders should leave us alone to sort out our problems

Dr Koh Guan Chai

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has made a name for himself and the country in the international arena. His courage to speak out against the powerful has earned admiration from many.

At the same time, he has also incurred the wrath of many powerful people. When he spoke out against the currency traders and George Soros, he was ridiculed. To those who hate his guts, the die is cast.

When Malaysia imposed the exchange rate controls, many speculators were caught short and suffered losses. That increased their hatred for the Prime Minister and Malaysia.

The forces aligned against Malaysia and Dr Mahathir in particular are very powerful. Practically all the foreign media, including the British Broadcasting Corporation, became their mouthpieces.

Deliberate lies and distorted reports about Malaysia are continuously churned out to discredit us. During the haze problem last year, their reports implied that the whole country was blanketed with haze throughout the year. They tried very hard to prolong the haze problem right up to the Commonwealth Games.

However, the Games went on smoothly with fine weather throughout. It must be a great disappointment to those who were waiting to bury Malaysia if something went wrong.

Unfortunately, they have caused us a lot of damage. How many tourists have been dissuaded from coming to Malaysia because of their slanderous reports?

It is very unfortunate that the issue of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim had to erupt. It gives just the right excuse to the forces waiting to hit out at us. Hence, we have more and more negative reports from the foreign media.

There were also the likes of former Hong Kong Governor Chris Patten who shamelessly said that Anwar was beaten to a pulp. There were those who equated Malaysia with Iraq. Calls were made by some quarters for sanctions to be imposed against us.

While not denying that Anwar has friends overseas, I am sure there are many who are speaking out not because they love Anwar but because they hate Dr Mahathir.

To Anwar's supporters, I hope they can recognise that these people are making use of the issue to continue their barrage of condemnation against Malaysia. I am sure no patriotic Malaysian would like to be a party to any plot to harm the nation.

To the leaders of the Western world, I appeal to you to treat Malaysia fairly. You cannot put us together with Iraq for we are never a threat to anybody.

To think that Malaysia has a policy similar to apartheid is absurd. To say that we are not as democratic as you people, well, it's not wrong but then we have different needs.

Had it not been for restraint or control of the Press and the so-called draconian Government, we could have had religious riots as recent as a few months ago.

If our Press can slander and lie like those in the West, it needs only a couple of months for the vernacular papers to stir up racial or religious issues to burn the whole country.

So, to President Bill Clinton, Prime Minister John Howard and other leaders, please leave Malaysia alone to sort out our own problems. If you

try to interfere, it will only make matters worse. The stability and peace that have been in existence for the last 30 years may be shaken.

A peaceful and stable Malaysia is a blessing to Malaysians. It is also in the best interests of the US, Australia and the world to preserve this stability.