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Mahathir-Newspapers

MALAYSIA MAY TAKE ACTION AGAINST BRITISH NEWSPAPERS

KUALA LUMPUR, May 2 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Malaysia is studying the possibility of taking action against two British newspapers for their reports alleging that the Malaysian authorities had mass poisoned and killed Indonesian illegal immigrants at detention centres.

"There is no truth in the allegation. We'll see what action we can take one way or another," he said when asked to comment on the reports.

Speaking to reporters after attending the Quality Day of the Implementation Coordination Unit in the Prime Minister's Department, Dr Mahathir said the reports were almost a deliberate attempt to undermine the country.

The authorities had found out that the news was apparently given by one of the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in this country, he added.

Dr Mahathir had said on Wednesday that the reports published by "The Observer" and "The Independent" newspapers were baseless and unfounded.

Asked to comment on a foreign report that Malaysia and Indonesia had made a secret plan to send back 50,000 Indonesian immigrants, he said there was nothing secret about it.

"This is not a secret plan but an open plan," he said, adding that Indonesia had an obligation to take back the illegals as these people had no work here.

"In fact they are sending their ships to pick them up...there is nothing to hide...Thailand is doing the same. Singapore caned them first but that does not attract comments.

"We don't even cane...I think we should cane...because when we do things nicely we get accused of all sort of things," he said.

Dr Mahathir said some huge media companies had accused Malaysia of suppressing and controlling the press when they had the world as their audience.

"They tell lies..they suppress news about us ...and yet they accuse us..it's about time our press tells the truth about them," he said.

He said censorship, control of the press and suppression of news were practised by huge media companies which had monopolised the world press.

These companies were getting bigger and bigger by acquiring more newspapers and satellite TV stations.

"These people have got control of the media, we have no access to their media...they are the ones with the press control," he said, citing that such press control was obvious when they only reported bad things about Malaysia and never reported what was good about the country.

Dr Mahathir said any form of control in this country would be in the interest of the public, especially on news that instigate riots, "otherwise you are free".

"They (foreign media companies) are the ones controlling the press. Try to write a letter to them...they won't publish," he added.

-- BERNAMA

AFY SHO JK