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Dr M suggests forming a news agency for developing countries

Farush Khan in Dhaka

CONCERNED over distorted and negative reports by certain foreign media, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has suggested that developing countries introduce a news agency which can reflect their own views.

The Prime Minister felt the developing countries were heavily dependent on the Western media for the dissemination of information which was "heavily tilted and gives distorted news about developing countries".

Dr Mahathir, who is here to attend the two-day second Development Eight (D-8) summit, was quoted by a local newspaper, The Daily Star, which front-paged the story yesterday, under the heading "Mahathir sees D-8 strength in its being goal-oriented".

The report also carried a picture of Dr Mahathir who was interviewed at his hotel suite.

The Prime Minister also spoke on the capability of Muslim countries to unite on a common platform for their own good and provide each other with the list of areas of support to enhance their co-operation in various fields.

Dr Mahathir, in the report, expressed regret that the wealth and potential of the Islamic and developing bastions "have not contributed to the welfare or the progress of most of us".

"None of us can lay claim to be a force of consequence in the international arena today.

"Some of us have been unable to make our nations stable and enhance economic capacity to match that of the advanced countries, none of which are Muslim," he was quoted as saying.

Stressing on the Western influence on developing nations, Dr Mahathir said: "The West is trying to impose conditions on us because we are weak.

"They also try to interfere in our internal affairs because of our weaknesses.

"Their control over the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and other international organisations enables them to twist the arms of the developing countries and give leverage to influence their politics and internal policies."

On the Malaysian economy, he said Malaysia had been able to make a turnaround from the slide.

"Our economy is now growing. This year, we hope to achieve at least one per cent growth."

On the performance of Bangladeshi workers in Malaysia, Dr Mahathir said they were doing very well.

"We are particularly benefitting by their experience in several fields, particularly in the construction sector. We have the usual problems with the cultural sensitivity of the local population. But on the whole we do not have anything which we cannot resolve."

He however made it clear that Malaysia could not take any more workers from Bangladesh because of its economic downturn.

"Now we are concentrating on building less labour-intensive industries to boost the income of our people. If there is no work we have to repatriate them (the foreign workers)."

He was also asked on what was his greatest success, to which he replied:

"It was to be able to maintain stability and racial harmony, which we value the most."

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