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DAIM-WESTERN MEDIA

GOVT SUCCEEDS IN CORRECTING NEGATIVE WESTERN MEDIA PERCEPTIONS

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 26 (Bernamna) -- The government believed that it had so far been very successful to respond in the most positive manner to correct the negative perceptions of the western media about Malaysia, said First Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin today.

"It is in our duty, everytime they (Western media) publish something that is wrong, it is our duty to correct them," he said in a dialogue after presenting a tea-talk, organised by Institute of Public Relations Malaysia, here.

He said the only way to show that Western media were bias and not factual in their reports, was to put across Malaysia's case.

He said the government was firm in its position not to leave things unchallenged and to correct immediately reports which were distorted or untrue.

He said things were always wrongly misintepreted by foreign press and that was the reason why he decided lately not to entertain foreign pressmen.

Asked whether the government has conducted enough publicity, public relations and promotion exercises to change the stubborn mind-set of the foreign mass media, he said, the government PR machinery was functioning.

"But whether it is effective or not, that is more important and I believe we have doen our best, but it is never enough to them," he said.

He added Malaysia has the foreign ministry, embassies as well as students overseas who could play a significant role to correct the wrong image projected by foreigners.

He said Malaysians abroad could be the ambassadors who could do the PR work for the country.

The government alone, he said, could not do it, but with all the loyal citizens' participations and contributions, the whole image of Malaysia can be strongly upheld.

Earlier in his speech, he said, elements of the foreign media were painting a negative picture of the Malaysian economy, politics and local leaders.

"The local media, in my opinion, was not quick enough to correct these negative perceptions," he said.

He also said the local media at times did not seem to have sufficient expertise to cover specialised and technical areas such as capital markets, macroeconomics or the stock market.

They (local media), he said therefore, lost out to foreign press or foreign analysts who took the opportunity to critically assess, provide their own explanations and judgement based on their narrow understanding of local events and blinkered knowledge of our economies.

He said news sensationalism prevailed in the absence of proper reporting and lack of positive information.

"For instance, the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's statement against currency speculators was played up unfavourably by the foreign press such that it even led to sharp falls in the equity and foreign exchange markets," he lamented.

However, when the Prime Minister was proven right, tihs was greeted with silence, he added. -- BERNAMA

RIZ KTC