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Mahathir-Honour

"IT IS A GREAT HONOUR IF AM CREDITED WITH UNITING THE OPPOSITION"- DR M

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 14 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he is greatly honoured if the foreign press credits him with uniting the opposition.

"I would like to inform these misinformed people, that I regard it a great honour if they believe that I have succeeded in bringing together different opposition parties from different races under one roof," he said.

Speaking to more than 15,000 Youth and Wanita members of the Barisan Nasional (BN) component parties at the Putra World Trade Centre here, he said the success of the BN was its ability to show that it could put behind racial origins in the interest of the country.

"Therefore I am very proud that I have been able to force opposition parties to put thick racism behind them and close ranks and if possible have a one to one fight," he said to thunderous applause from the crowd.

It was his first meeting with BN component party members following the dissolution of Parliament on Nov 11.

Dr Mahathir, who is also the BN Chairman said he and the BN had succeeded in bringing the opposition people who were so thick with racism together in a so-called front.

"They sleep together but dream different things. The BN components do not sleep together but we have a common dream to preserve the country, the nation and its independence."

Speaking to reporters later, the Prime Minister said although the foreign press was giving wide coverage to the opposition parties and nothing at all on the Barisan Nasional and yet they complained that the opposition was getting "unfair treatment" from the local media.

"All the foreign papers devote their pages and their front-page reports to the opposition...nothing at all for us and how can you say that they don't get any fair treatment," he said when responding to reporters' questions.

Dr Mahathir said some of the foreign newspapers were even printed in this country but yet they never wrote anything good about the BN and the government had never censored them.

The Prime Minister also said that it was up to the local newspapers to decide what they wanted to print.

He said the government gained nothing from the reports by PAS-owned "Harakah" and DAP's "Rocket" which always condemned the government.

On press freedom in this country, Dr Mahathir said: "Freedom of the press is the freedom not to report what they don't want to report and we have never complained."

He said foreign media reports such as those from the CNN and CNBC were easily available in Malaysia, "eventhough their reports were always biased".

-- BERNAMA

AFY HT AAM