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Mahathir-West

I AM NOT AGAINST WESTERN MEDIA, SAYS MAHATHIR

LANGKAWI, July 27 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he is not against the western media all the way and is only critical of their irresponsible reporting.

He said their irresponsible reporting such as harping on and consistently showing only negative aspects could adversely affect the economy.

In Malaysia's case, he said, television networks like Cable News Network (CNN) continued to show last year's and last April's riots in Kuala Lumpur consistently for days portraying that Malaysia was in turmoil although isolated rioting only lasted only a short time and was confined to certain parts of the capital.

As the result, the outside world got the wrong impression causing tourists to cancel trips to Malaysia and this severely affected the country's revenue from tourism, he said.

The prime minister was responding to BBC World Service managing editor for Southeast Asia, Asia and the Pacific Chris Greene at a press conference at the end of the four-day Langkawi International Dialogue (LID '99) here.

"We want to thank them for showing the Serbian brutality in Bosnia through vivid pictures which made the world aware of their atrocities and the need to take action.

"I am full of praise for the media," said Dr Mahathir.

He referred to the picture shown by CNN about a British soldier being very angry when he found out that a whole house had been burnt to the ground by the marauding Serbs.

"I am not against the Western media all the way but there are times they say nasty things which do not affect me but the country," he said.

He also chided the New York Times as being among the media which wrote unfavourable things about the country and its leadership.

"The newspaper claimed that I know nothing about finance, managing economy and how to run the country," he said.

The prime minister said the foreign media should at least recognise the fact that he had run the country of 22 million people successfully.

"At least recognise that we are not that stupid.

"They never acknowledged the success, and a lot of what I have done right has never been reported," Dr Mahathir said.

He said he was not against the Western media but criticised them when inaccurate and irresponsible reporting occurred.

Answering other question from the local media, Dr Mahathir said the local media should tell the truth.

"They should criticise the government when we are doing the wrong things. When we are doing the right things, don't praise, just tell the truth that we are doing the right things.

"The problem in Malaysia is that not much truth came out from the vernacular newspapers such as the Tamil and Malay newspapers," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Harakah, PAS' official organ, for instance, had never told the truth at all.

"They can say whatever they like but there is a Malay saying that the dog may bark at the mountain but the mountain remains there," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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