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`SPLA rebels violating ceasefires'

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THE AP article, "Sudanese live in fear of government bombs" (Business Times, 22-23/9/2000, page 11) is a good example of "The international media's negativity" over which Honourable Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad expressed regrets and criticised for not contributing to the people's well-being and development (Business Times 22-23/9/2000, page 2).

The article is one-sided since it quotes the rebel side and disregards the Government's. It is only logical and more credible when one reports about a conflict between two to include points of view from both sides to avoid being biased.

To redress the imbalance, it should be mentioned that the Sudan Government has opted for a peaceful negotiated settlement for this conflict since it had come to power in 1989 and has regarded this as its Number One priority.

Towards that end, my Government declared, on several occasions, comprehensive ceasefires, the latest of which was made on September 21.

Furthermore, the Government has adequately addressed the root causes of the war by securing a fair share of power and wealth to the South. Unfortunately, the SPLA rebels failed to duly reciprocate to all these genuine endeavours and they are the ones who always violate these ceasefires.

The international community should exert more pressure on the SPLA to accept a comprehensive ceasefire, as it is a prerequisite for any peaceful solution to the conflict.

The SPLA and those who stand behind it should realise that unless they accept a negotiated resolution to this conflict, the war will continue and so will the suffering of those caught in between. One hopes that the SPLA will be more serious during the current Nairobi peace round.