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Be fair and tell the full story

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READING a recent International Herald Tribune dispatch from Kuala Lumpur, a person unfamiliar with Malaysia would have thought that the correspondent had taken an unnecessary risk.

He or she would have even imagined that Mr Thomas Fuller ran the risk of being speedily dispatched by the authoritarian Mahathir Mohamad.

Mr Fuller would be another journalist victim of a draconian Third World regime that thinks nothing of sending goons to beat a hapless, selfless crusading western journalist to pulp.

Of course, no self-respecting reader of IHT sitting somewhere in downtown New York would believe that Mr Fuller was in fact writing his own version of pulp fiction to humour his readers.

Who, in the right frame of mind, sitting in a sidewalk cafe of Paris, and, as Gary Moore said in his song, "sipping Beaujolais wine", would believe that Mr Fuller was himself sipping a double cappuccino at Bangsar's Coffee Bean.

How could a country that is ruled by an authoritarian Prime Minister using draconian laws not dispatch an irritating foreign correspondent like Mr Fuller to the garbage bin with his hands tied behind his back?

How could a country that is ruled by an authoritarian Prime Minister allow a troublesome, western-owned, Paris-head-quartered IHT to be printed in his capital city and distributed freely in his country?

And if Malaysian judges are subservient to the draconian and authoritarian Mahathir Government, why should they be allowing a Queen's Counsel (one Mr Geoffrey Robertson of England) to represent a foreign correspondent?

The judges should instead make sure that Mr Raphael Pura, whom I came to know as a young reporter of the Asian Wall Street Journal in 1976 and who is, perhaps, one of the longest serving foreign journalists in Malaysia, loses every penny he has in the mega suit.

Pura is being sued for RM180 million by five parties, including tycoon Tan Sri Vincent Tan, over a 1995 article in the London-based magazine International Commercial Litigation entitled "Malaysian Justice on Trial".