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Officials urged to provide correct information on policies

Kamarul Yunus

INFORMATION Ministry staff must give correct interpretation of government policies to prevent confusion among the people, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

"This role is very important, especially when there are parties misinterpreting a policy to the extent that it could create an undesirable situation in the country," he said on a visit to Angkasapuri in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Dr Mahathir cited as example the misinterpretation of the New Economic Policy (NEP) by certain parties, which gave the impression that it only benefited a small section of the people.

"If we make an interpretation based solely on two and three people who are seen to have benefited greatly from the NEP and ignore all the efforts made for so many Bumiputeras, then the policy appears to be unfair and needs to be stopped," he said.

He added that if the NEP is stopped, many Bumiputeras will be deprived of the education, scholarship, licence, permit, financial assistance and 1001 other opportunities created by the NEP.

He said if a person does not know how to interpret government policy, it may result in a good thing becoming bad and a bad thing good if viewed from all angles.

"The Information Ministry has the responsibility to give a correct interpretation and picture of what is happening in our country.

"The world has acknowledged Malaysia as one of the most progressive developing countries.

"It's impossible that we could have built our nation so rapidly if we had concentrated only on two, three people who received so many perks for themselves," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said that he wanted information and explanation given to the people to be balanced, that is, touching on the success of a policy as well as the problems faced.

"If we succeed in showing the people all aspects of our nation in an equitable manner, giving attention to the problems as well as successes and balancing the two, the people will get a correct perception of what is happening in our country," he said.

Speaking to reporters later, Dr Mahathir said he had asked the information officers to be more professional when explaining government policies to the people by giving an accurate background to the issue.

"Otherwise, there will be wrong perception and ultimately the Government's credibility will be affected," he said.

On his meeting with US Ambassador B. Lynn Pascoe on Tuesday, Dr Mahathir said he was just explaining the Government's stand towards the new US administration.

"Malaysia looks forward to having refreshed ties with the US under the Bush administration. This includes minimising misunderstanding between Kuala Lumpur and Washington.

"We thought that with the new administration, perhaps we can invigorate our ties with the US and lessen misunderstanding with the US."

At the same time, Dr Mahathir reiterated that foreigners should not meddle with the internal affairs of Malaysia.

"We do not want to see foreigners getting involved in our internal affairs. We do not intervene in their affairs, so why should they get

involve in our affairs," he said, in reference to the participation of several foreign diplomats, including from the US embassy, at a gathering held by Keadilan, the opposition party.

On a tense standoff between the US and China over the detention of a US Navy spy plane, Dr Mahathir said he regrets that the incident happened.

"In the first place, there should not be such incidents. No country would like to be spied on by others.

"Furthermore, spying on other countries can be done at long range, such as using the satellite. I hope the US and China can solve this problem," he said.

The Navy spy plane had made an emergency landing on Hainan island in China and the Chinese authorities were said to have entered the plane, looking for secret information.

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