

28 DEC 2001

Mahathir-Media

PRIME MINISTER SATISFIED WITH RESIGNATION OF SUN EDITORS

PUTRAJAYA, Dec 28 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is satisfied with the action of a few top level media practitioners of The Sun newspaper who resigned after publishing a front page story on a plot to kill him and his deputy Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

"That is the least they can do. It shows that they have some sense of responsibility," he told Bernama at his office here today.

Dr Mahathir said he was satisfied with the actions of key editorial personnel of the paper provided such reports were not published again taking into account the well-being of the country.

"Well, I'm satisfied but it should not happen again...that is important," he said.

On Dec 25, The Sun ran a front page report, quoting sources saying that an assassin had been hired to kill the country's two top leaders.

Following the denial by the police and the two leaders that there was such a plot, the editor-in-chief of the paper H'ng Hung Wong and its editor Andy Ng tendered their resignation while chief news editor Robert Ho was suspended.

Reporter R Manirajan, who wrote the story, and photographer Anita Md Nasir were also suspended indefinitely by the paper.

Asked whether a media council was needed to monitor the industry in future, Dr Mahathir said it was possible that such a council could prevent the incident from recurring.

"But everyone involved with the media must understand their responsibilities, not only to the industry (newspapers) but also the nation," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that after reading the report in The Sun, he laughed because he did not expect the report to have a far reaching implication.

"But when I find that the news was spread to the whole world and had a negative effect on the nation, I had to make a rebuke on how serious the matter was."

"A newspaper report should take into account the interest of the nation because their (the media's) existence in Malaysia is dependent on the country's peace. If the situation in the country is chaotic, it is possible that they cannot do business," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the media owed its existence to the situation in the country and must contribute to the nation's stability so that they could "earn a living".

-- BERNAMA

SR NZ AO