

'Government has no say in running of newspapers'

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his Cabinet Ministers had never given instructions to newspaper editors on what to write or do, New Straits Times Press group editor-in-chief Tan Sri Abdullah Ahmad said.

He said the Government had no hand in determining the reports in the newspapers, adding that it could not stop news from being carried in the newspapers.

Only the editors could, he added.

Since heading the NSTP in August last year, Abdullah said the *New Straits Times* had made great progress in its reporting, with circulation increasing to 165,000 for the Sunday edition and 155,000 for the daily paper, as of last week.

He said it was the balanced reporting in the *NST* which enabled it to attract readers.

"Newspaper editors are neither heroes nor cowards, but they take responsibility for what appears in the newspapers," he said at a talk on the "The ISA Experience and the Role of the Media" at a forum on Press freedom today.

The forum is held in conjunction with the World Press Freedom Day which falls tomorrow.

It is organised by the *Utusan Melayu* branch of National Union of Journalists.

Abdullah said as a newspaper editor, he was not in favour of Press controls.

"As a former ISA detainee, however, and having been a target of a ruthless media inquisition, I cannot seriously object to them either," he added.

He said he was not against the ISA in spite of what had happened.

"It is a useful means to have in hand and the recent threat of terrorism bears witness to its continued utility in the present day, even with the ending of the communist insurgency.

"The risk, of course, lies in its abuse, which is not in itself a reason for its abolition."

However, he said this abuse could be guarded by voting in a responsible Government, and not appointing as Home Minister, an overly-ambitious man as had happened in the mid-1970s.