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Newspaper headlines must reflect the true picture

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IF one were to read the headlines of the main English and Malay newspapers on Sept 3, one would think that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad actually attended two different meetings with the Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Malaysia and other Chinese groups the previous day.

Why? Because the spin on the matter as captured by the headlines was completely opposite between the Malay and English-newspaper headlines.

The English newspapers had a more positive and conciliatory tone, giving the impression that there is hope for an amicable solution.

But take a glance at the Malay-newspaper headlines and you would think that a great conflict is looming on the horizon.

I can only imagine what the Chinese-newspaper headlines suggested.

Obviously, the issue of the use of English for Maths and Science is of great importance to every Malaysian particularly those concerned with the education of our children.

For this very reason, newspapers have given prominence to the issue. What is disturbing is the spin that different newspapers put on the same story.

It's one thing to have free and open reporting on issues, it's quite another to make the stories out to be something they are not.

Reading the stories closely, one newspaper did not differ much from the other.

Indeed how can they differ much when they came from the same source: the Press conference held after the meeting?

Only the headlines were shockingly different. Maybe it's just sensationalism, a common trait of newspapers trying to improve circulation and sales.

Still, one cannot help but hope that newspapers should be more guarded about how they portray certain stories.

Ours is a society made up of a delicate balance of different racial and communal interests.

Wanton disregard of this reality would not benefit anyone. It may cause