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Point-by-point rebuttal in letter to 'Economist'

KOTA BARU, Sun. - The Government's official letter to The Economist to counter issues raised in its article on Malaysia entitled A qualified success, was accompanied by a point-by-point rebuttal to claims made by the writer Christopher Lockwood.

National Economic Action Council executive director Datuk Mustapa Mohamed, who signed the letter, said today the letter incorporated the main facts of the article which the Government felt should be corrected by the magazine while the rebuttal dealt with the factual errors in detail.

"The letter and rebuttal were sent to The Economist on Friday and the magazine has acknowledged receiving them the same day.

"In the letter, we urged the magazine to publish the letter and the point-by-point rebuttal as soon as possible, preferably in its next issue," he said.

He said acting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi had given his approval to the contents of the letter and rebuttal before they were faxed to the magazine.

Mustapa was speaking after chairing the Malaysian chapter of Organisation for Industrial, Spiritual and Cultural Advancement, of which he is the president.

"The Government feels that the article does not paint a correct picture of the success of Malaysia and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"So, we feel it is appropriate for corrections to be made to change that perception," he said.

Mustapa was asked to elaborate on Abdullah's statement yesterday that another letter had been sent to The Economist to correct factual mistakes in the article which insulted Dr Mahathir.

Abdullah said the magazine's editor-in-chief in London had replied to a letter from the Home Ministry which had expressed reservations about the article.

He said the magazine was prepared to correct and apologise for factual misrepresentation, but was standing by the views presented in the article.

Abdullah said the magazine was willing to give Malaysia the opportunity to rebut claims made by the writer.