

29/04/2003

We should sue `Economist`

Beldeu Singh

I REFER to the analysis by Munir Majid (NST, April 27) of the recent article in The Economist. The article is cloak-and-dagger journalism done under the cloak of a "survey", letting the dagger do its work in a pre-conceived plot.

The survey is used to build up a story to say something seemingly good and positive about your "target" which may help to create the illusion of objectivity (and a good way is to project incontrovertible achievements, even listing them). It is presented as something "coming out of Malaysia".

Then the dagger is slipped quietly from the shadows into the heart of the target in the hope that everything will look quite innocent and objective.

To publish an opinion as a fact is not journalism, as it is not the truth that would prevail. To distort truth to support an underlying theme is a crime against journalism itself.

In this connection, telling the world that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is "a power-mad jailer" means that The Economist should have incontrovertible proof, or at least substantial proof of the charge. If it does not, in my opinion, the mere tendering of an apology is grossly insufficient.