

# Dr M: Suspend editor for few months

## 'No understanding of Muslim feelings'

NST - 24/2/2006

**KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs.** — Former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that the editor of the *New Straits Times* should be suspended for "two to three months" for twice publishing a comic strip linked to the controversy over the Prophet Muhammad caricatures.

"Although the newspaper is not suspended, the editor should be suspended. Because one can see that when he prints it, he doesn't understand the feelings of the Muslims," he said.

Dr Mahathir said by taking action against the newspaper, the Government would drive home the point that if a media organisation did something wrong, it would not escape punishment.

The 160-year-old newspaper, one of the region's oldest, yesterday received a show-cause letter from the

Internal Security Ministry over a syndicated *Non Sequitur* cartoon by Wiley Miller. It showed a street artist sitting on a chair next to a sign reading: "Caricatures of Muhammad While You Wait".

The NST was given three days to give reasons in writing why action should not be taken against it for publishing the cartoon in its *Life & Times* section on Monday.

The newspaper reprinted the cartoon yesterday on Page 2 of its main section, with a comment that if the cartoon had transgressed the limits, the Government must hold it accountable because no one nor any newspaper should get away with insulting any religion.

Dr Mahathir described the newspaper as "insensitive" in reproducing the comic strip.

"They are very insensitive and they



**DR MAHATHIR:** Described the newspaper as 'insensitive' in reproducing the comic strip

should be sensitive because they know this story is not something out of the blue," he said of the caricatures which enraged the Muslim world after they were first published in Danish and European newspapers.

"So, why do you publish it (the comic strip)? It shows that you lack understanding of the sentiments of the Muslims. And again they reproduce it yesterday as if to say what is so wrong about this.

"To ask the public that question, 'Look, this is what we published, what is so wrong about it?' is already evidence that you don't understand. And you reproduce the comic strip at the same time."

Several organisations have lodged police reports against the newspaper.

Dr Mahathir said that in taking ac-

tion against the newspaper, the Government would demonstrate that "it doesn't differentiate between newspapers which support it and those which are neutral".

"If you have done wrong, action will be taken and the action has to be consistent," he said, referring to the suspension of the *Sarawak Tribune* and *Guang Ming Daily* newspapers for reproducing the caricatures of Prophet Muhammad.

Dr Mahathir was also asked on the argument that the *New Straits Times* did not reprint the actual caricatures of Prophet Muhammad.

"But to say that somebody is sitting there and for some money, will make a caricature (of the Prophet), that means you are saying that this is all right," he said. — Bernama