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Mahathir-Suharto

MAHATHIR: MY RELATION WITH SUHARTO IS GOOD

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LANGKAWI, July 18 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today dismissed any assumption of strained relations between him and President Suharto.

"There has been never any strain on our relations. Our relations have always been cordial, with each of us calling on the other every year," he told a press conference at the international airport at Padang Matsirat here before returning to Kuala Lumpur.

Dr Mahathir and his wife, Datuk Seri Datin Paduka Dr Siti Hasmah Ali, had earlier bade farewell to Suharto and Ibu Tien at the airport at the end of the Indonesian leader's three-day working visit.

Dr Mahathir said that last year he held talks with Suharto during the Non-Aligned Movement meeting in Indonesia and Suharto's trip here was a reciprocal visit.

The visits showed that our relations were good and fine, he said. -- more

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Mahathir-Suharto 2 Langkawi

Dr Mahathir said the private discussion he had with Suharto yesterday, which lasted two-and-half hours, was a very cordial meeting and this proved that there was no truth to the assumption of strained relations.

"We have always been frank on key issues whenever we meet. I will visit Indonesia next year," he said.

"If there are differences of opinion on issues which have become a topic of public discussion on our relations, the visits we have every year have corrected any wrong perception which may have arisen," he said.

This difference of opinion had been misinterpreted by the media as strain in relations, he said.

He said even if there had been a difference of opinion between them on the approach to be taken at the NAM meeting, it was not something which had created the feeling of being offended. -- more

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Mahathir-Suharto 3 (last) Langkawi

The Indonesian media then and now might have assumed that relations were strained but the talks in Indonesia and here did not at all show the existence of the situation portrayed, Dr Mahathir said.

He said relations between the ministers of both countries were good, as shown by the talks here the past three days.

The Indonesian ministers who accompanied Suharto were Ali Alatas (Foreign), Hartarto (Industry and Trade), Abdul Latief (Manpower), Joop Aye (Tourism, Posts and Telecommunications) and Moerdiono (Minister/Secretary of State).

The Malaysian side comprised Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi (Foreign), Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid (Agriculture), Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz (International Trade and Industry), Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik (Culture, Arts and Tourism) and Datuk Lim Ah Lek (Manpower).

Dr Mahathir said relations between officials of both countries were also fine.

"With this visit, relations at all levels have been further enhanced following the establishment of personal contact," he said. -- Bernama

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