

11/07/1998

Amien Rais: Malaysia's situation not as serious

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Indonesia's most vocal opposition leader Amien Rais said Malaysia was not facing the problems faced by his country which led to the downfall of former President Suharto.

He said Malaysia might have some problems but the situation was "not as bad as that in Indonesia".

"In the case of Indonesia, the situation has become almost hopeless," he said, replying questions from reporters after paying courtesy calls on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his deputy Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim at the Prime Minister's Department today.

On his meeting with Dr Mahathir, Amien said he briefed him on the latest developments in Indonesia.

He said Dr Mahathir had stressed on the need for both countries to stand on their own feet.

Asked whether the situation in Indonesia had improved since Suharto's resignation, Amien said there was no sign of optimism.

"This is very confusing to the people who thought the US dollar would go down after Pak Harto stepped down. But, the dollar is still sky-high.

"Reforms to be carried out have still a long way to go. The removal of Suharto was a big step, but must be followed by many more steps."

Amien said Indonesia was like "a very sick man of Asia undergoing treatment at the intensive care unit" while countries like Malaysia, Thailand and South Korea were only "patients recuperating at ordinary wards".

Amien, who is the leader of Muhammadiyah, Indonesia's second largest Muslim organisation, also addressed a forum organised by the International Movement for a Just World at Universiti Malaya tonight.

He spoke about the Indonesian situation and answered questions regarding his perception on what was happening in Indonesia and its economic and political developments.

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