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APEC-NEWS-MEDIA

MAHATHIR TAKES ON FOREIGN MEDIA IN STYLE

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CYBERJAYA, Nov 18 (Bernama) -- Barely 72 hours after U.S. Vice President Al Gore enraged Malaysians by supporting the "Reform" movement, two American journalists tried to embarrass Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in the presence of other Apec leaders by asking him about the movement's demand for the Prime Minister's resignation.

Their attempts however failed when Dr Mahathir, being a seasoned politician, replied in his usual style that it was not the proper forum for the two journalists who are believed to be working for the Western media, to pose such questions.

Dr Mahathir had earlier read out the Apec Declaration after the Pacific Rim leaders met for nearly eight hours to discuss economic cooperation during their customary retreat here, some 40km south of Kuala Lumpur.

After reading out the declaration, Dr Mahathir allowed the press comprising mostly foreigners to ask "three or four question".

An unidentified American journalist posed the first question by asking Dr Mahathir if he (Dr Mahathir) and Gore had overcome their "differences", referring to Gore's statement on the "Reform" movement.

Gore had criticised the capital control measures imposed by Malaysia and supported the anti-government reform movement in his speech delivered at the Apec Business Summit dinner on Monday night.

The Prime Minister said: "I don't know of any differences. I am not aware."

He then turned to Gore who was standing on Dr Mahathir's far left and asked the U.S. vice-president "Were there any (differences)?".

Gore just smiled at Dr Mahathir while the other leaders remained silent.

Another unidentified American journalist posed a similar question to Dr Mahathir by asking him on the so-called demand by the movement to seek his ouster.

To this, the prime minister said: "I don't think this is the proper forum to discuss that."

After answering the third question, posed by a local reporter, on whether the Apec leaders discussed the proposal to regulate the international financial system, Dr Mahathir told the press corps that there would be no more questions.

Later, Dr Mahathir as the Apec chairman bade farewell to the Apec leaders including Gore before leaving for the Palace of Golden Horses hotel for a news conference on the Apec leaders' meeting which ended here today.

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