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Time-Mahathir

TIME PICKS MAHATHIR AS ASIA'S NEWSMAKER OF 1998

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 22 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has been chosen by Time magazine as its Asia's Newsmaker of 1998.

" No one drove the news with such ferocity this year as Dr. M -- and that makes him Asia's Newsmaker of 1998," the world's No. 1 newsmagazine said in its latest edition.

Time describes the prime minister, who turned 73 on Dec 20, as brisk, modern, quick to diagnose and even readier to prescribe.

" In addition to crafting Malaysia's grand, national affirmative action scheme, Dr Mahathir also personally chose bathroom fixtures for the world's tallest building, Kuala Lumpur's Petronas Towers," it said.

The magazine wrote about Dr Mahathir's firing of his deputy Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim in September, the street demonstrations that followed and the exchange controls on the Malaysian currency.

" He put the world on notice that unfettered capitalism may not be for every country --a concept that has gained adherents worldwide since Mahathir began raving about speculators' conspiracies and Jewish financial cabals more than a year ago," it said.

It said Malaysia had undergone vast changes in the past year and when the economic crisis started to bite, seemed better suited to weather the storm than virtually any of its troubled neighbours.

According to the magazine, few believe the "battle" between Dr Mahathir and Anwar has ended, adding that what will ultimately determine Dr Mahathir's fate isn't Anwar's ongoing trial on corruption and sexual misconduct, but the economy.

" If he succeeds, he could inspire others worried about capitalism's excesses. He gave us 16 years of tremendous development, prosperity and shared wealth," Time quoted Paddy Bowie, a naturalized Malaysian citizen who has known Mahathir for about 30 years, as saying.

It said the events of 1998 have put a sharp focus on the Mahathir era and his outspokenness has put Malaysia, indeed the developing world, on the map.

-- BERNAMA

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