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Mahathir-Asiaweek

PM HITS OUT AT ASIAWEEK FOR ATTEMPTING TO SMEAR HIM

PUTRAJAYA, Feb 1 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today slammed the Asiaweek news magazine for deliberately publishing a picture of him in its Jan 26 issue with an attempt to portray him as a foolish and tired-looking person.

"To find a picture that makes you look as if you are an idiot, is deliberately done," he told reporters after attending a function to mark the declaration of Putrajaya as a Federal Territory at Dataran Perdana, here.

Dr Mahathir said he was taken in by the smiling and friendly interviewers who managed to persuade him to come out from his office at the Prime Minister's Department to take nearly 200 photographs.

The interview was conducted by Asiaweek's editor Dorinda Elliot, managing editor Salman Wayne Morrison and correspondent Arjuna Ranawana.

"They must have taken nearly 200 photos but chose that +so right+ photograph," Dr Mahathir said.

The prime minister was asked to comment on the picture with the caption "Is the prime minister being left behind by a new Malaysia that he helped build?" that accompanied the story with the headline "Mahathir's Dilemma".

The picture, taken by Munshi Ahmed for the Hong Kong-based Asiaweek, depicted Dr Mahathir, who was in his bush jacket, as a person "slumped in his chair and appeared tired and worn down by the unprecedented criticism of his rule" -- a phrase used in the story.

Dr Mahathir said it was obvious for someone who has been working almost 24 hours a day and sparing little time to rest to be tired.

"Anybody would look tired. I work about 24 hours a day and I rest a little. I cannot do any work in the office because so many people come to see me. I go home and sit down and write all my letters, speeches and other correspondence.

"It works, sometimes, of course you look tired," he said.

Dr Mahathir was also asked about his "I don't care" reply to a question by the Asiaweek interviewers as to what he thinks he will be remembered for.

"What matters to me is what I've done. If the people recognise it, it is okay, but if they don't recognise it, it okay too. I won't be around anyway, whatever they say about me, I won't be around," said the prime minister.

"I would be hovering up there, looking down," he joked.

-- BERNAMA

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