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Mahathir-Apology

DR MAHATHIR HAPPY WITH TIME MAGAZINE APOLOGY

By: Ahmad Zukiman Zain

MOSCOW, March 16 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is glad that the Time magazine has apologised for its inaccurate report about Malaysia.

He hoped it would not be repeated.

"I'm very glad that they have now discovered that the accusation levelled at us is inaccurate," he told a press conference at the end of his three-day official visit to Russia here Saturday.

He was asked to comment on the apology tendered by the magazine over its Feb 11 edition which had tarnished Malaysia's image.

The apology was received in writing via a letter dated Feb 28 by the Time Headquarters in Lancaster, London. It was signed by its international publisher Andrew Butcher who expressed his deepest regret over the mistake.

"Of course, I'm very happy and I hope that in future they would report accurately what is happening in Malaysia," said Dr Mahathir who left for Stuttgart to begin a three-day visit to Germany.

In its Feb 11 issue, Time carried a cover picture of the Malaysian flag with the star replaced with the image of Osama bin Laden, giving the impression that the country was a terrorist state.

On the statement by the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Director Robert S. Mueller III that it was inaccurate to say Malaysia was the launching pad for the Sept 11 attacks and that the country had worked closely with Washington to fight terrorism, Dr Mahathir said: "As he said, what we have done, we have done even before Sept 11, which means we are doing this (to fight terrorism) on our own."

He reiterated Malaysia's stand against terrorism, saying the country was taking action against potential terrorists in the country because it was in Malaysia's interest.

"If it coincides with the interest of the United States or other countries, we have no problem with that," said Dr Mahathir, who was flanked by Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar and International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz.

Also present were Health Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng and Malaysian Ambassador to Russia Datuk Kamaruddin Mustafa.

On the decision by the California Pension Fund (Calpus) to withdraw their earlier views of not wanting to invest in Southeast Asian countries because they were thought to be unsafe, the Prime Minister said he was glad that Calpus had revised their views.

"We are seeing yet another institution reviewing their views on Malaysia in particular and Southeast Asia.

"Their previous views were not valid simply because they were made without proper in-depth investigation," he said.

Most of them were relying on "shallow" newspaper reports which did not study the country and had their own agenda, he said.

"Therefore, their reports were wrong and anybody who makes decision based on the reports of these media will make a wrong decision.

"I'm glad that Calpus have now revised their views on Southeast Asia... I believe that during the recent bond issue, Calpus was among the funds which wanted to buy Malaysian bonds," he added.

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