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Dr Mahathir-Bush

BUSH MADE THE BIGGEST LIE WHEN HE SAID HE REBUKED ME, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

SUBANG, Oct 25 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said President George W. Bush had made a biggest lie when he said he did rebuke him during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) meeting in Bangkok recently.

"It's the biggest lie. If he had rebuked me I'm quite sure I would have rebuked him also," he told reporters after arriving from Papua New Guinea at Royal Malaysian Air Force Base (RMAF), here today.

The Prime Minister said it was common for someone, who could lie about the existence of weapon of mass destruction and go to war because of that, to lie about what he said to him.

Dr Mahathir was asked to comment about Bush's statement during his visit to Indonesia last Wednesday, in which he admitted to have rebuked Dr Mahathir when they met at the Apec meeting.

The Prime Minister said that from what he remembered Bush had pulled him aside, only to explain why he had made such a strong statement against him.

"I think he wants to support his officer (Whitehouse spokesperson Scott McClellan)," he said.

Last Tuesday, Dr Mahathir denied McClellan's statement that Bush had rebuked him over his speech regarding the Jews at recent Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) summit in Putrajaya.

However, Dr Mahathir said the incident was a minor issue and what was important was that he was able to give his views during the Apec meeting on the needs for restructuring of the international financial regime.

"...and also my views on Cancun (World Trade Organisation meeting) which I believe is not a total failure as far we are concerned," he said.

Dr Mahathir also warned Australia not to act as they liked in the region eventhough they received U.S. support as the so-called sheriff in the region.

"We will treat them like terrorists. We will arrest and throw them in jail if they come to Malaysia," he said.

Dr Mahathir also disagreed with Bush's view that Australia played an important role in ensuring peace in the region.

"They have no role whatsoever in maintaining peace (in the region) although they are member of the five-power defence pact. We don't expect them to help us. We have ask them to leave the country with their air force and all.

"But we are still kind enough to allow them to practise here," he said.

Asked to comment on claims by SBS TV's Dateline programme that the Washington-based International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), of which Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim was one of its three directors, has been accused in the United States of funding terrorist activities, Dr Mahathir said it was not known whether Anwar knew about the institute's other activities.

"I don't know whether Anwar know about its (institute's) other activities. We are not involved, although we are aware of Malaysians involved in activities like the Al-Qaeda," he said.

Anwar's wife Datin Seri Wan Azizah, who heads the Parti Keadilan Nasional, had denied that IIIT had any links with terrorism or Al-Qaeda.

Meanwhile, Dr Mahathir has described his visit to Timor Leste and Papua New Guinea as interesting and fruitful.

"Timor Leste is a very interesting place. As usual it is not as what I

have expected," he added.

However, Dr Mahathir said Timor Leste, as a resource rich country, had vast potential particularly in the oil and gas sector but it would not gain much from the present agreements with some parties who were only interested in exploiting its oil and gas sector.

"I believe that the present agreements with the people (who are interested) to exploit its oil and gas, Timor Leste will remain as a poor country," he said.

Speaking of Papua New Guinea, another resource rich country, Dr Mahathir said Papua New Guinea had shown interest in the Bumiputera policy adopted by Malaysia.

"Papua New Guinea is a resource rich country but they do not have the capacity to exploit resources, and they depend more on other countries and foreign companies.

"But I think, these foreign companies will not give Papua New Guinea a fair deal," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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