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Mahathir-US

DISCARD FORCE, USE FRIENDLY APPROACH, DR MAHATHIR TELLS US

By: Arul Rajoo

BANGKOK, Oct 21 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has said that the United States should change its approach of using force in dealing with conflicts around the world and instead return to its friendly ways that have won the hearts of many in the past.

In an interview with the Bangkok Post yesterday and published today, the Prime Minister said that if the US continues to use its current approach, it would not be able to resolve the conflicts it started.

"They must learn. I have great admiration for the United States. They saved us from Japanese occupation and at one time they were concerned about the welfare of everybody," he said.

Dr Mahathir, due to retire in 10 days' time, said it was sad to see American embassies all around the world to be protected, in sharp contrast to the past when they gave aid to everyone and sent its Peace Corps everywhere.

"That's a measure of bad feelings against the Americans now. That's because they changed in attitude. They have become so powerful," he said.

Dr Mahathir, here to attend the 11th Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) forum, said the US, being the only superpower, does not seem to be bothered whether others like them or not.

He said using force to submit others seemed to be their foreign policy now while sanctions are applied on countries labelled as not a democratic country.

Dr Mahathir said such policy of using force to curb terrorism had made things difficult for countries like Malaysia and Indonesia.

"And it does not help the United States because they cannot solve this problem by using force alone, no matter how strong they may be. As you can see in Iraq, they can conquer Iraq but they cannot subdue, people will take potshots at you," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia's experience in dealing with terrorism clearly showed that finding the root cause of conflicts and terrorism as well as winning over the people were the best approach.

"Most of the terrorists in the past were Chinese. Under British rule they were not given any rights, they were not citizens, so they wanted to take over the country for themselves so we gave them citizenship and opportunity to do business," he said.

During the interview with the paper's editor-in-chief, Pichai Chuensuksawadi, Dr Mahathir also spoke about terrorism, globalization, democracy and challenges that he faced during his 22 years in power.

Asked about his speech at the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) in Putrajaya last week which prompted harsh criticism, Dr Mahathir reiterated that it was taken out of context.

"In my speech I condemned all violence, even the suicide bombings, and I told the Muslims it's about time we stopped all these things and paused to think and do something that is much more productive. That was the whole tone of my speech, but they picked up one sentence where I said that the Jews control the world," he said.

But he said the reaction of the world shows that the Jews do control the world.

Dr Mahathir also gave his usual and frank remarks on the currency crisis, the Internal Security Act (ISA), money politics, the so-called cronyism, the Western press, judiciary, and the Israel-Palestine conflict.

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