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Mahathir-Sukarno

DR MAHATHIR FEELS HE IS NOT COMPARABLE TO SUKARNO

By: Openg Onn

JOGJAKARTA, Oct 22 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, regarded by Indonesia as the late Sukarno in the present era, said his successes are still nothing compared to the first president of Indonesia.

"I feel I can't be compared with Sukarno. He was a well-known figure and succeeded in uniting a race divided into hundreds of ethnic groups," he said in a special interview with a local television station, TV7 here today. The interview was conducted in two languages -- Malay and English.

He said it must be remembered that Indonesia, with a population of more than 220 million, was so much bigger compared to Malaysia whose population was only about 23 million.

With a population and area that was 10 times much smaller like Malaysia, it was much easier to overcome the problems, he said.

The interview, aired live by the station, was conducted by a panel of four senior journalists -- Sabam Siagam from The Jakarta Post, August Parengkuan and Susanto Pujomarto from TV7 and James Luhulima from Kompas. Dana Iswara from TV7 was the moderator.

Dr Mahathir had earlier attended the award giving ceremony for the Distinguished Honorary Fellow Award conferred by the AFEO (ASEAN Federation of Engineering Organisations).

The Prime Minister, who is well known and widely respected in this country, is also regarded as "Sukarno Kecil" (Sukarno Junior) as a comparison for his successes in developing Malaysia and his outspokenness against western powers, imperialism and capitalism.

Dr Mahathir said he was very familiar with Sukarno's struggles, adding that the late president was the first to hit out at economic imperialism and neo-colonialism.

"This idea came from Sukarno. At that time, many people laughed (because) they never thought it would happen," he said.

He said that now these things were happening and in a very ugly form with economic power in the hands of the imperialists.

Asked on who he wanted to be remembered as after retiring from his government post at the end of the month, he said it was up to the others because it was not for him to decide.

He said the evaluation would be made by others, adding: "Maybe on some occasions they will appreciate me and maybe there are also others who will criticise (me). This is human nature."

He said it was up to the world what they wanted to call him as he had tried his best to carry out what was entrusted to him as Prime Minister.

"Actually what I did was to carry out policies of the first, second and third Prime Ministers. I attend to all aspects of the Malaysian development from the economic, social and political aspects. Some (are) successful, some are not.

"I cannot say what I would like to be known as. But perhaps if you insist, I would say that my greatest satisfaction is the fact that I have been able to unite people of three different major races, who would usually be in confrontation. I unite them and ensure that they work together in order to develop Malaysia.

He was also asked on his several outbursts against the west and the possibility that Malaysia might have to face strong reaction from them.

He said there were certainly reactions, but he was convinced that

Malaysia could counter all these moves taken against the country.

"This depends on the country's economic and political situation. Our country is strong and united. Although there is pressure from the major powers, we can overcome it," he said.

He said his outbursts against the west were based on his feelings about the truth of the matter.

He said when he felt that something was wrong, he would say it out aloud, otherwise those responsible for the wrongdoings would get away with it without anybody stopping them.

"Things like double standards. They can do these things, but we cannot do those things. That is unfair, I have to say it out because it is unfair," he said.

-- BERNAMA

OPP JM AO