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Indonesia-Mahathir

INDONESIA'S LEADING DAILY PRAISES DR MAHATHIR

By: Openg Onn

JAKARTA, June 26 (Bernama) -- Indonesia's leading newspaper "Kompas" today heaped praise on Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who will retire in October after leading the country for 22 years.

The front-page article entitled "Dr Mahathir's Hand Lifts the Malays" not only praises Dr Mahathir for raising the dignity of Bumiputeras "from a second class community", able to compete with other races, but also for enhancing Malaysia's image at the international level.

"One of the criteria for a successful leader is to leave the throne gracefully. He also paves the way for his successor in a situation of relative calm."

"From this aspect, Dr Mahathir Mohamad is a successful leader," the article said in its introduction.

"In the neighbouring country (Malaysia), Malays have an honoured place. From a second class community, he has raised their dignity," said the paper which has the largest circulation in Indonesia.

From this aspect, Dr Mahathir not only earned the praise of Malaysians but also was a warrior of the Malays in Indonesia, Kompas said.

Kompas said Malaysia and Indonesia were listed among the eight Asian countries with rapid growth and industrialisation and were labelled "The East Asian Miracles" by the World Bank in 1993.

Malaysia and Indonesia were also ranked among the "Emerging New Industrial Countries" (ENIC) but clearly Malaysia was indeed different, the daily said.

The economic crisis of 1997 which led to crises of various dimensions after that, had dragged Indonesia to a level slightly above that of some African countries.

However this did not happen to Malaysia and in 1999, that country moved out and ahead, recording an economic growth of five per cent, it said.

Kompas also praised Malaysia's move to implement the New Economic Policy and the policy to bring progress to the Bumiputera community but at the same time not ignoring the interest of the Chinese community which indeed had dominated the country's economy.

The daily said Malaysia measured its economic success from the aspect of equitable distribution of income so that its citizens enjoyed greater overall prosperity.

"Not only that, from an agricultural country, Malaysia has become an industrial nation, which after all had been Indonesia's dream through its five year development plans."

"Probably we have forgotten the term development plan, but Malaysia has implemented it steadfastly."

The article also briefly touched on the background of Dr Mahathir and described his wisdom and leadership.

Dr Mahathir separated politics from business interests. This should be emulated by Indonesia's political elite, Kompas said in concluding the article.

-- BERNAMA

OPP LAT AAM