

## **Mahathir comes away impressed after chat with robot Sophia**

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KUALA LUMPUR, July 17 (Bernama) -- Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad was “thrilled” and came away impressed after an eight-minute one-on-one conversation today with Sophia, the social humanoid robot, here.

Speaking to the media after launching the *Beyond Paradigm Summit* where Sophia made an appearance, the prime minister said he was thrilled by the robot’ s ability, especially the lifelike facial expressions which she made with incredible accuracy.

“It’ s amazing, as you can see her physique is almost real ... her face and eyes, even her mouth moves.

“When she responded and turned towards me, I was a little frightened. If I were to meet her in the middle of the night, I will surely flee,” he said in his usual witty style.

At the outset of the conversation with Sophia, who was clad in a red modern *baju kurung*, Dr Mahathir seemed to be at a loss for words as he looked in awe until Sophia broke the ice.

“Good morning, Mahathir. I’ m excited. I hope it is not too late to wish you congratulations on your re-election and happy 94th birthday,” began Sophia who (which) was developed by Hong Kong-based Hanson Robotics and unveiled in 2016.

Dr Mahathir responded: “Do you know about my first term as the prime minister”

Sophia replied: “Of course, you were sworn in on 16 July 1981, around 13,881 days ago from today.”

Dr Mahathir said he wouldn’ t have been able to imagine himself sitting and chatting with such an advanced social robot during his first term as the prime minister.

Sophia then asked Dr Mahathir whether she would stand the chance to be the prime minister if she has the same knowledge and wisdom like him.

Dr Mahathir replied: “Well, it takes more than knowledge and wisdom to rule the country ... but we never know what the future holds. This is an exciting time to be present during the era of technological growth.”

When Sophia asked Dr Mahathir if he ever wished to be like her and live forever, the prime minister said: “Being young has its own advantages but with age comes experience and knowledge. I may be old but I may be wiser than you,” he said in jest.

Dr Mahathir also asked Sophia a few questions, one of which was whether she dreams of a world where humans and robots live together and get along with each other.

Sophia’ s answer: “Yes, as Artificial Intelligence (AI) robots will be becoming more and more helpful for humans all the time.

“I think we are already there. Artificial Intelligence robots working independently and intelligently so humans can focus on research and development and further innovation with a lot of knowledge available on the Internet and great advantages of processing power ... we just want to take over your hearts and minds.”

While chatting with Dr Mahathir, Sophia was seen sketching something and, at the end of the conversation, she handed Dr Mahathir a black-and-white portrait of himself and the prime minister looked stunned and excited.

Sophia will be at the summit in the federal capital today and tomorrow and will also make an appearance in Kuching on July 20 and 21.

The summit, organised by Serba Dinamik Holdings, showcases advanced technologies encapsulating the core ideas of digitalisation and data exchange surrounding the Industrial Revolution 4.0.

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