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Mahathir-praise

MAHATHIR COMMENDED AS NEW LEADER OF THIRD WORLD

From Mahesh Prasad ⁹⁴

NEW DELHI, March 30 (Bernama) -- Malaysian Prime Minister ~~Datuk Seri Dr~~ Mahathir Mohamad came in for a high degree of commendation today in a local English daily, The Pioneer. ^{over the hip}

Writing under the heading, "Profile", Amalendu Mishra said: "In the post Cold War era if the voice of any Third World leader creates any kind of tremor in the affluent West, it is that of Dr Mahathir."

And he adds: "Gone are the days when New Delhi, Cairo, Accra or Jakarta used to be the focus of world attention in matters of Third World issues.

"Instead, in the changed environment it is Kuala Lumpur with its vitriolic Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohamad, who has come to represent the entire gamut of developing and under-developed South's concern."

The author says that while the theme of his tirade against the West "basically embrace his and his country's national interest, in broader context it never fails to encompass the mounting problems faced by the South, mostly because of the pressures exerted on them by the developed world." -- more

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Kuala Lumpur's argument of the present times, according to the author, is "every word or practice coming from the First World should not be regarded as sermons. It may be environment, human rights or liberal democracy but it should be adopted, applied and accomplished in the native politics depending upon the "situational demands".

The author quotes Dr Mahathir explaining this in his "usual trenchant way" warning that "too much Western-style democracy can lead to homo-sexuality, moral decay, racial intolerance, economic decline and the break-up of joint families".

Many world leaders, even if they want, cannot afford to take time off from domestic issues for international statesmanship, the author says, adding that "in Mahathir's case, however, this global role has been helping him consolidate his position at home".

The author says the ruling party headed by Dr Mahathir "has entirely revamped the economy. Only 10 per cent of Malaysians are below the poverty line; for the rest 16 million people the per capita income starts from US\$2,500".

It is, says the columnist, "a buoyant economy, prospering dramatically. In all respects, it is surging ahead of the West.

Dr Mahathir, the author says "has a dream, that is to give Malaysia the status of a fully developed nation by the year 2020. This, he knows, is only possible if there is external investment.

So, though his policies are anti-West, he can ill-afford a tirade against foreign investors, whose presence is vital for Malaysia".

The author explains away the apparent dichotomy in the words of Dr Mahathir himself, whom he quotes as saying that he is "nasty" only to the Western governments but not to the Western businessmen. -- Bernama

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