

04/09/2000

Islamic society's loss for not meeting Dr M

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RECENT news of the Islamic Society of North America's last-minute withdrawal of its invitation to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to address its convention in Rosemont, Illinois, does not augur well for the future development of Islamic countries.

By rescinding the invitation, Isna has lost the opportunity to listen to a genuine Muslim leader who dared look IMF managers in the eye and tell them they were wrong in prescribing a common medicine to solve the economic problems of all East Asian countries.

Isna members have lost the chance to learn about how Malaysia's ingenuity solved its economic crisis without bowing to the pressures of the IMF.

More importantly, they could not learn of the Malaysian Government's achievements in elevating Islam as a foundation of the country's growth or of how it had infused Islamic values within its administration, banking system, educational system and development - a feat unequalled by other Muslim countries.

Malaysia, through the Islamic International University, is providing high-level education not only to locals but also poor foreign students from as far as Africa. Malaysia's Islamic banking system reflects the success of the infusion of Islamic values, a programme launched by Dr Mahathir soon after becoming Prime Minister in July 1981.

It was under Dr Mahathir that Malaysia managed to modernise its economy and attain full employment status amidst price stability, a rare performance in many developing countries and certainly not in many Muslim countries.

Malaysia has successfully undertaken a massive social engineering programme, even bigger than the US's own affirmative action programme. The Government has managed to reduce the poverty level, reduce the economic gap between the Muslims and the non-Muslims and distribute income and wealth using economic growth with distribution philosophy long before the World Bank exhorted developing countries to do so.

Malaysia has one of the most equitable income distribution system among developing countries.

All these feats are largely due to Dr Mahathir's Malay Dilemma published in the early 70s which motivated Malays into self-evaluation and striving for excellence.

Yet Isna does not see it fit to learn from Dr Mahathir, all because of distorted accounts of how Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim fell from grace. Anwar received just sentences from a judiciary as fair as, if not fairer, than that of other countries.

But if Isna members refuse to recognise facts and choose to pacify those whose contributions to the Muslim world are limited to lies and slander, it would be their loss.

They have missed the chance to pick the mind of a man whose contributions to the development and welfare of the Islamic World are nothing short of remarkable.