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India-Mahathir

MAHATHIR'S SERVICES COMMENDED

By: Mahesh Prasad

NEW DELHI, Oct 31 (Bernama) -- The services of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who retired today as Malaysia's fourth Prime Minister, to the cause of building a plural society in Malaysia has been commended in the Indian media.

In an article the noted columnist, Praful Bidwai, says Dr Mahathir's entire 22-year-long political career has centred on opposing Malaysia's Islamic extremists and building a plural society with Malays, Chinese and Indians co-existing, and with a level of prosperity unequalled in most of the Third World, leave alone India.

Referring to Dr Mahathir's address at the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) Summit, he said: "I wrote angrily against Mahathir's anti-Semitic remarks. But upon carefully reading the text of his speech, I realise this was just one small part of what he said. His real thrust lay elsewhere; in opposing fanaticism and jihadi violence, and pleading for moderate, liberal, forward-looking Islam."

The author says Mahathir vented the frustration that millions of Muslims the world over feel as a result of a long, messy history of colonisation, destabilisation of West Asia and successive defeats inflicted by Israel upon the Arab States.

He quoted Mahathir as saying "We are all Muslims. We are all oppressed. We are all being humiliated."

However, says the author, Mahathir argued explicitly against paranoia and blind anger: "Angry people cannot think properly. And so we find some of our people reacting irrationally. They launch their own attacks, killing just about anybody, including fellow Muslims, to vent their anger. Every attempt at a peaceful solution is sabotaged. But the attacks solve nothing. The Muslims simply get more oppressed. A thoughtful, patient strategy alone can redress the Muslim world's grievances."

Mahathir was quoted by the author as saying; "Pausing and thinking calmly is not a waste of time. We have a need to make a strategic retreat and to calmly assess our situation."

He cited anecdotes from Prophet Muhammad's life to argue against blind revenge and for sanity, the author adds.

The author says depending on one's own religious preferences, one may or may not empathise with this religious ummah-based reasoning. But this is undeniably a passionate plea for reform, moderation, modernity and logical thinking of a kind that's rarely heard in the Islamic world. Mahathir's own credentials in this regard are impeccable.

In another article, one V. Anantha Nageswaran, commended Dr Mahathir's call for a redefined global trade agenda at the recent APEC Summit. Dr Mahathir, says the author, was correct to suggest that fair trade could be free, but free trade has been unfair.

The author says by sticking to the trodden path and snubbing Dr Mahathir, APEC leaders might have gained a personal victory, but lost a political battle against poverty and terror.

-- BERNAMA

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