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`Dr M an example of a true Muslim leader'

Ahmad A. Talib

LEBANESE Prime Minister Rafic Hariri heaped praise on Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, saying that his Malaysian counterpart is a good example of a true Muslim leader and has taken his country to success.

At a joint Press conference after their meeting yesterday, Hariri said: "Dr Mahathir has turned his country into one of the world's most sophisticated economies. He is a big leader of the moderate Muslim world, and he presents the real Islam."

Standing next to Dr Mahathir when speaking to the media, Hariri said: "You know how much Muslims these days are under attack. We are very proud to have a leader like Dr Mahathir, who is well known in the world.

"He is a leader with a vision, moderate, strong and has led his country to be the best. This is an example to moderate Muslims of what they can achieve in leading their countries, and Malaysia is one of the leading countries in the Muslim world," he said.

He was also asked if he would miss Dr Mahathir, who has announced his intention to retire this year.

He said: "We have talked about this; you know this is up to the Malaysian people and to the Prime Minister to decide, but if we had a word, I would ask him to stay."

He said he told Dr Mahathir during their meeting that he would always be welcomed in Lebanon.

He said Dr Mahathir was not only the leader of Malaysia, but also one of the few leaders of the world who took his country from where it was 22 years ago to what it is now.

"So, we welcome you here. We feel proud that you are among us. Your people and yourself are always welcome to come to Lebanon anytime," he said.