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Regional tributes to Dr M

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's retirement also has also elicited regional reactions.

In Singapore, The Straits Times in its editorial, says that Dr Mahathir has been such a permanent fixture, "it will be hard to conceive of a neighbourhood without him. Correction - make that a world stage.

Singaporeans, among many others, it says, will have to make a mental adjustment. The editorial notes that Dr Mahathir's retirement is well-learned.

"This newspaper which on occasion had incurred the wrath of his government has little doubt he will not simply fade away in Langkawi to write his memoirs."

The Singapore Business Times, in its editorial focuses on the Malaysian premier's disappointment with Malays.

"Notwithstanding his many achievements, by his own reckoning, Dr Mahathir relinquishes the prime ministership today a disappointed man," it says.

As Dr Mahathir has often said, the Malay community did not live up to his ambitious vision for them, said the newspaper.

The Today newspaper, gave a front-page coverage of Dr Mahathir headlined: "An era ends today and Dr M is ready to sail alone."

After 22 years of political rhetoric and a shock resignation announcement in June last year, Dr Mahathir is finally retiring to "sail round the world alone," it quoted the premier as saying yesterday.

Channel News Asia has been showing special reports on Dr Mahathir during its prime-time news for the past few days, and it has also created a special segment dedicated to the expremier on its web site.

In Jakarta, many Indonesians are full of praise for Dr Mahathir and say they will miss his leadership.

They see Dr Mahathir not just as the Malaysian Prime Minister but as an Islamic leader close to their hearts.

"His voice is very much our voice. We are proud of him. Malaysia is lucky to have had such a leader," said Mines and Energy Minister Purnomo Yusgiantoro.

Purnomo was the last Indonesian minister to be with Dr Mahathir before his retirement today.

He was assigned by President Megawati Sukarnoputri as Minister-in-Attendance when Dr Mahathir visited central Java, last week, to receive the Honorary Engineering Award from the Asean Federation of Engineering Organisations.

To the hundreds of workers of Bawean Island in the Java Sea off the northern coast of the island of Java, who had worked in Malaysia, their attachment to Dr Mahathir is so deep that they had named a road in their village after him.

The Jakarta Post in its editorial "Mahathir Mohamad's Legacy" also paid tribute to Dr Mahathir and for the orderly transfer of power to his successor.

It said that an orderly leadership succession was one of the most important achievements that a developing non-Western country could attain. "Dr Mahathir has shown that it is politically feasible for a non-Western country to manage an orderly succession."