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Think-tank retirement gift for Dr Mahathir

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, leaving office this year after decades of rubbing the West the wrong way, is getting a personalised retirement present from his followers - his very own think-tank.

On Thursday, the 77-year-old leader again served up his essentially anti-Western world view for an adoring audience at the general assembly.

Soon after he sat down, senior party figures rushed to back proposals to set up a "Dr Mahathir Mohamad Institute of Strategic Thinking" once he retires at the end of October.

"Since he is a great leader who is more advanced in his thinking than his people, it is timely that we set up such a centre," Datuk Mustapa Mohamed, an Umno luminary, told the conference in a motion of thanks.

The former medical doctor regularly prescribes ideas for alternative economic systems, analyses of Middle East problems and what he calls the backwardness of Muslim countries.

His speeches are often reprinted in Africa and the Middle East and his newspaper columns are popular in Japan.

But he made his biggest impact in 1970 with a book titled *The Malay Dilemma*, dissecting his own people's shortcomings in an analysis drawn heavily from social Darwinism.