

03 OCT 2003

Mahathir-Retirement

MAHATHIR'S EXIT UNIQUE IN MUSLIM WORLD, SAYS EX-PAKISTANI MINISTER

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 3 (Bernama) -- Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's retirement on Oct 31 is something unique in the Muslim world and a rarity in the Third World, according to a former Pakistan Cabinet minister.

Mushahid Hussain, who served as Information Minister under the administration of ex-Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif says for centuries, the Muslim world has not been able to settle the fundamental issue of power politics -- political transition-- with Islamic history replete with power struggles sparked by wars of succession.

" Dr Mahathir is all set to implement his commitment to leave his powerful position voluntarily, honourably and peacefully," he says in a recent article published by the Dubai-based Gulf News.

Hussain, who is a member of Pakistan's Upper House, the Senate, says in the Third World voluntarily relinquishing high office is a rarity and only two leaders have done so in recent history, Nelson Mandela of South Africa and China's Jiang Zemin.

" When Mahathir retires, he will have the satisfaction of bequeathing a legacy of stability, prosperity and democracy to his country. At 78, he still exudes charm, charisma, energy and stamina, with a hands-on approach to development, domestic and foreign policy," he says.

Hussain, who visited Malaysia recently and met federal and state leaders, intellectuals and policy-makers, asks Muslims worldwide who he says are downright demoralised these days and groping in the dark for instant solutions to long-standing problems, to examine the basis of the Malaysian success story.

" Why is it that Malaysia has succeeded where others have failed? How come a state with a mixture of races and religions, has been glued into a

nation, with an inclusive, tolerant political culture? After all Malaysia had to face a long-running Communist insurgency during its formative years," he says.

Hussain identifies five reasons for Malaysia's success as a nation with the main one being leaders who have the vision to articulate and implement policies, especially in making education their number one priority.

He says secondly, Malaysia has democratic institutions with an uninterrupted political process, giving a sense of participation to people representing all segments of society and removing any sense of alienation and deprivation.

" The government weakened the Communist insurgency's base by giving citizenship to the Chinese, providing them with a stake in the system. Third, the ability to learn from mistakes and not repeat them, whether it was the insurgency or the race riots," he says, referring to the May 13 1969 racial riots here.

He also attributes Malaysia's success to the policy of religious tolerance especially the role of Islam in a multi-racial and multi-religious society.

Hussain says the fifth factor is the role of women as an integral and important part of the educated work force and who play an active role in all areas of society in a country where productivity is considerably enhanced by the richness and diversity of the female labour force.

The Pakistani law maker says as Muslim countries prepare to gather in Malaysia later this month for the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) summit, they should learn lessons from the "Malaysian Model" which has the potential to provide a way out from the malaise currently afflicting Muslim societies.

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