

The Merchant King: Global Woes In A Different Light
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NEW DELHI, April 19 (Bernama) -- If one has to reflect on events in the last two decades that have shaped the world today in a humorous way, "The Merchant King," a novel written by an Indian journalist, Shakir Husain, is the book to go for.

The book is definitely a reflection of his 14 years in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as a journalist amid the ability to candidly capture world events since the time South African president Nelson Mandela was freed after spending 27 years in prison to the recent global financial crisis.

In UAE, Shakir has worked for Yahoo, Gulf News and The Gulf Today.

In an interview with Bernama, Shakir said it took him four years to finish the book with much time spent in shaping the characters, their roles and to be able to touch on certain issues without making any particular reference.

The story starts with a young ambitious prince named Saqr from a country called Balad (literally means nation in Arabic) studying in London with the aim of coming back and modernising his country in an undefined area, which is neither Africa nor Asia.

Like the name of the country, readers would find hilarious acronyms such as a homeland security system named the Management of Armed Defence, National Emergencies and State Security (MADNESS), Consulting Corporation (ConCorp) and Big Oil and Gas Upstream Services (Bogus) company as well as banks called Big Bucks and Borrow & Spend - just to name a few.

A lot of humor has been thrown in to keep the readers amused and the narrative light-hearted, while addressing the challenges the world was facing now.

"We are all living in it, militarism, racism, dictatorship and manipulation that goes on and on. It is a story of what we see on a daily basis," he said, when asked about the other issues that he had touched in his first book.

Although one can relate the scenarios in the book to the actual events that had taken place, there are no direct linkage to certain personality or country, said Shakir, who used to be a stringer from UAE for BERNAMA.

Being an admirer of Malaysia's former Prime Minister, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the writer has also covered issues such as globalisation and currency war.

"Dr Mahathir often says globalisation should not be about the movement of capital alone, if you believe in genuine globalisation, people should be able to move freely, but some countries have barriers and yet talk about globalisation, which is well reflected in the book," he added.

Shakir, who is looking for a publisher outside India, feels people from all walks of life would enjoy the book as the story stands by itself, but if one has interest in politics "they would love it".

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