

Mahathir a true leader of the Muslim world - Imran Khan

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KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 4 -- Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan has expressed his admiration of his Malaysian counterpart Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, whom he considers is a true leader.



Imran Khan said Dr Mahathir is an example of a leader who takes a stand, especially for the betterment of Islam and Muslims.

"There is a difference between an office holder and a leader. A leader always has a belief system and ideology.

"A leader always takes a stand and that is why we love and respect Prime Minister Dr Mahathir so much," he said, referring to Dr Mahathir's outspokenness against India.

Imran Khan, who gave a talk entitled 'Vision for Regional Peace and Security' at the International Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies (IAIS) here today, said this when asked by a member of the audience about India's move to stop buying Malaysian palm oil, following Dr Mahathir's criticism of India's actions in Kashmir and its new citizenship law.

The former cricket star said Dr Mahathir is also seen as a role model and statesman in the Islamic world who changed the destiny of so many people.

"We have seen how Malaysia transformed and developed under the leadership of Dr Mahathir. But what I also like about Malaysia is that it has a very civilised society.

"I find there is harmony between religions and ethnic groups which I think is a hallmark of civilised society.

"In the golden age era of Islam, people of different religions lived together. There was tolerance and acceptance...And you see in Malaysia people live in harmony, and in my opinion it's really something to be admired," he added.

Meanwhile, Imran Khan said the 1.3 billion Muslims of the world should speak up on the Kashmir issue, especially the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

"In my opinion, it could get worse. If you read history, whenever anyone stokes the fire of ultra-nationalism and directs hatred to other communities, it always leads to bloodshed," he said.

The prime minister also said Pakistan is always ready to reconcile with an India that believes in prosperity and poverty alleviation in the region.

He said among the first things he did after becoming Prime Minister was to reach out to his Indian counterpart.

"The greatest number of poor people live in the Indian subcontinent and the best way we can reduce poverty in the area is if the two countries start good relations.

"The moment tensions go down and we spend less on defence, the more prosperous it will be," he said, but noted that Pakistan kept getting rebuffed by its neighbour.

During the talk, Imran Khan also highlighted his vision of a Pakistan that is based on Prophet Muhammad's success in establishing Madinah as the first Islamic state with the people's welfare and rule of law as the main principles.

He said Pakistan has already embarked on becoming a welfare state, as for the first time in the country's history, health insurance was given to the weakest segment of society, benefiting six million families.

The Prime Minister added that universities in the Muslim world need to do a detailed research on the state of Madinah as a recipe to build a successful country.

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