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FOREWORD

Democracy, Sabah, and the Malaysian Parliament

In April 1985, the Government belatedly and very formalistically, celebrated the Silver Jubilee of the Malaysian Parliament. There was no attempt to assess and evaluate the record of the last 25 years' of parliamentary democracy in Malaysia, to ascertain whether there is more to lament than to celebrate.

There are people, especially those in power, whose concept and proof of parliamentary democracy in Malaysia is the imposing Parliament House, the regular holding of general elections and the existence of Members of Parliament. To them, these are evidence enough of the functioning of parliamentary democracy in Malaysia.

In July last year, during the debate on my motion on parliamentary democracy in Malaysia, the Gerakan MP for Tanjong, Dr. Koh Tsu Koon, argued that the fact that in every general elections, there is a high voter turn-out of over 70% shows that there is a successful parliamentary democracy. By Dr. Koh's reasoning, the Soviet Union must be the most democratic country in the world for they can get 99% or even 100% turn out in their elections!

These are people who are solely concerned about the external trappings and form but not the substance and meaning of parliamentary democracy. In the July Parliamentary debate, for instance, the Gerakan Deputy Agriculture Minister, Dr. Goh Cheng Teik, welcomed the Opposition to make hard-hitting criticisms in Parliament, if the drains were clogged, garbage not collected, or the power supply broken down but he did not want the Opposition to raise big issues, which could be emotional or what he said '*exploited*'. By this, Dr.