

PM: Don't destroy our democracy

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SHAH ALAM, Fri. — Democracy in Malaysia will be destroyed if there is a split in the Barisan Nasional, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Monamad said tonight.

The Prime Minister said the democracy in the country was the result of co-operation between the Barisan component parties and he urged them to remember their responsibilities to preserve the system.

He said the Opposition and certain groups were irresponsible and "we understand their chauvinism. We must not follow them... if the Barisan Nasional splits, the democracy in this country will be destroyed."

Dr Mahathir, who was opening the 34th MIC general assembly at the Dewan Jubli Perak here, urged Barisan leaders not to go "beyond the limits of democracy and destroy the democracy in this country."

"If we believe in the voice of the majority, let's follow the majority," he said.

He said the interests of the minority were protected in a democracy but that did not mean they could use illegal or dirty tactics to threaten the majority.

He urged Barisan component party leaders not to express their dissatisfaction over policies or their implementation in public but

through the proper channels within the coalition.

For the bigger parties, he said, the Cabinet could also be used as a channel.

"This way, clarifications could be made without hurting the feelings of any one party, member or leaders of smaller component parties.

"With that solidarity the Barisan would not be doubted or questioned and its hold on the country's politics and the economy would be strengthened," he said.

He commended the MIC Wanita and Youth for being aware of these channels and their readiness to avoid having differences in opinion with other Barisan com-

ponent parties.

Dr Mahathir said several countries had been taken over by military governments or other autocratic forms of rule because the people did not know how to use the democratic system or know its limits.

"They regard democracy as the freedom to do what they please or when they achieve power through democracy they abuse this power."

He said there were also groups which thought they were more qualified to rule the country than the leaders the people had chosen.

These groups, he said, did not involve themselves directly in political activities

because they were not confident of getting the people's support.

Instead, they make use of their democratic rights to frustrate the Government's efforts, he said.

He said they would play up racial sentiments with the hope that the Government would act sternly against them and create riots as a result.

"And when the Government takes action to put a stop to their adverse activities, they would criticise us as undemocratic," he said.

Such strategies, he said, had destroyed democracy in a few countries.

Democracy in Malaysia had lasted because the majority of the people understood the system and knew its limits, he added.

Dr Mahathir said the Barisan was the only party which truly understood the democratic system and used it properly.

He said if Malaysia did not have an Alliance and the Barisan after that, dozens of parties would compete and not one would be able to obtain enough representation to form a government.

This could only be possible with a "marriage of convenience" but in most countries such governments were unstable, he added.