

Can't impose type of democracy: Dr M

OCT 1988

UNITED NATIONS, Wed. — No country has the right to impose its form of democracy on another because democracy, by nature, confers a freedom of choice on its believers, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said countries practising democracies such as those in the West should not expect others so young in nationhood to practise the same principles overnight.

Dr Mahathir, in his fourth address to the United Nations General Assembly, said: "Democracy must confer a freedom of choice. No one has a monopoly on the democratic type that

everyone should have.

"Certainly, no one should force his own choice and interpretation on someone else. While harsh and even violent methods may be used to force dictatorship to yield democratic forces, it would be tragic if a working, prosperous nation is destroyed because some self-appointed democrat felt it was not democratic enough.

"This holier than thou attitude is out of tune with modern mores.

"The democracies of the West took hundreds of years in the making. Do not expect colonial territories ruled autocratically for several centuries by Wes-

tern democracies to become perfect democracies overnight," Dr Mahathir said to a round of applause from delegates at the assembly.

This point in his speech was well received and Foreign Ministers and delegates from participating countries stood in line to offer their congratulations to Dr Mahathir who stood for 40 minutes to deliver his address.

To force

"We like that part of your speech on democracy. Someone has to say it as frankly and openly as possible," the delegates told him.

If this is democracy and

freedom, they then can keep it, Dr Mahathir said, a point shared by many other developing countries.

The Prime Minister said ideologies and philosophies are forced upon weak nations in the name of democracy.

"As with fanatical religious proselytisers, the so-called champions of democracy are not averse to using undemocratic and coercive means to force their particular brand of democracy on the weak and the poor.

"Refusal to comply results in all kinds of economic and political arm-twisting," Dr Mahathir said.

Dr Mahathir - Oversea tips