

'DON'T BLOCK COOPERATION'

PM lashes out at rich nations

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By AZAM ARIS

DEVELOPED and industrialised nations should not try to block good international cooperative efforts initiated by small countries like Malaysia if they are truly champions of democracy.

Prime Minister/Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said democracy is not confined to within one's boundaries but must also be practised internationally.

"Opposition to the East Asia Economic Group (EAEG) is a good example of developed countries trying to block an effort initiated by a small country. Where is international democracy then?" he asked.

They may criticise democracy in this country but they must also respect democracy between nations, he added.

The Prime Minister stressed that Malaysia does not claim to be big and powerful, adding that just because Malaysia is small it does not mean that it has no say. "The developed nations are the power in this area ... everything must be referred to them. If this is the case, then there is no democracy," he said.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said that Malaysia will stick to its own brand of democracy as it has proven to be beneficial. The country has posted rapid economic growth

and is able to maintain racial harmony. "In fact last year, the country's economic growth rate of 10 per cent was the highest in the world... a feat not achieved by any developed nation."

He said Malaysia will not want to have human freedom to the extent that people can riot in the streets and burn down houses. "If this is what is meant by freedom then I do not want it," he added.

Asked to comment on the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)'s 1990 Human Development Report which praised Malaysia for practising a high level of human development but at the same time said the country has a low freedom ranking (a level even below that for Israel), he said Malaysia is used to this type of criticism and does not expect developed countries or international organisations like the UNDP to admit that they are wrong as they think they are always right.

The Prime Minister, speaking to the Press in Miri yesterday at the end of his four-day visit to Sarawak, said the people in the country are quite happy with the freedom they have and asked whether there was any freedom when the colonialists ruled this country.

"Did they allow us to elect our representatives? But the moment we start to rule ourselves they talk about freedom," the Prime Minister said.

The Prime Minister said there are some developed countries which discriminate against immigrants who are of a different colour or origin. They also suppress their aborigines, often leaving them out of the mainstream of national development.

He said the aborigines in Australia are badly treated while in this country the aborigines are well looked after and provided with good health and medical care.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the West and international organisations will still prefer people like the Penans to remain in the jungles and will criticise the Government for trying to bring development to them.

"Bruno Manser now lives in Switzerland. He is giving speeches on his encounters with the Penans and getting a lot of money for it. The Penans are merely an object for his anthropological studies."

To give the Penans an opportunity to share in and enjoy the country's wealth is democracy, he added.