

'All must have role in new world order'

Dr M on need for a democratic UN

From Balan Moses

NEW YORK, Wed. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has called for the democratisation of the United Nations to allow all members of the body to participate in the shaping of a new world order that will ensure economic and social justice for everyone.

The Prime Minister hopes that the new order will not be one imposed by the main beneficiaries of the current revolution and which will work only towards the needs of a restricted group of countries.

Referring to the East-West conflict following the Cold War that converted poor countries into pawns and proxies for the larger powers, he said there were doubts as to whether the new world order formulated by any one country or group of countries would be good for everyone.

Addressing the 46th United Nations General Assembly here yesterday, he said: "We are already feeling heavy hands forcing us to do this and not that. In East Asia we are told that we may not call ourselves East Asians as Europeans call themselves Europeans and Americans call themselves Americans.

"We are told that we must call ourselves Pacific people and align ourselves with people who are only partly Pacific but more American, Atlantic and European. We may not have an identity that is not permitted nor may we work together on the basis of that identity.

"Is this the foretaste of the new world order that we must submit to?"

Elaborating on the fact that democracy was the hallmark of a fair and just international society, Dr Mahathir said there were obvious differences in the practice of the concept even among those preaching democracy to Malaysia.

The Prime Minister, who was the sixth speaker, questioned the rights of those preaching democratic values to interpret and practise it according to their likes and dislikes and force their interpretation on others.

"Cannot the converts too interpret the details of democracy, if not the basics?"

"If democracy means the right to carry guns, to flaunt homosexuality, to disregard the institution of marriage, to disrupt and damage the well-being of the community in the name of individual rights, to destroy a particular faith, to have privileged institutions which are sacrosanct even if they indulge in lies and instigations which undermine society, the economy and international relations, to permit foreigners to break international laws; if these are the essential details, cannot the new converts opt to reject them?"

Underlining Malaysia's belief that hegemony by democratic powers is no less oppressive than hegemony by totalitarian powers, he said democracy would have no meaning at all if people did not have the right to make their own choice on what they needed.

In this respect, he said, there was also a need for democracy between the nations of the world, making them equals in their own right.

However, in the United Nations, five countries were more equal than the remaining 166. Seven countries laid down the laws which adversely affect the economies of other countries. A few nations on their own have taken it upon themselves to determine the new world order.

Powerful trade blocs demand voluntary restraints and impose laws and rules extra-territorially, making it obvious that the various

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nations are unequal, even in the United Nations.

The Prime Minister said this pointed to unhealthy, undemocratic relations between nations despite the belief that equality and freedom were to be the sole guiding principle of the day.

He said members of the United Nations needed to ask if they were prepared to be shackled to decisions taken by world powers spawned by the 'second world war given the fact that new powers had emerged since and the major powers had seen some structural changes.

He said: "If international democracy as represented by the United Nations is to be meaningful and effective, there must be an infusion of current ideas and realities,

"The world needs policing as the Gulf War demonstrated to us. But are we to have self-appointed policemen or are we to have a police force that is beholden to this august body, the United Nations?"

"Police action by the United Nations needs to be governed by principles and rules. Laying siege and starving out a castle or a city until the people have rats to eat or starve may seem appropriate and acceptable in the olden days but can our conscience remain clear if a whole nation is starved into submission?"

Expounding on the horrendous effects of war and use of modern weapons, he said the United Nations should extend its role of inspector in Iraq to supervise the destruction of nuclear weapons everywhere.

The body should supervise the invention and pro-

duction of all diabolical weapons, ensuring that weapons for defence should be for that purpose alone and not for aggression except in a limited way.

Dr Mahathir said research in new weapons should be reduced and no weapon should be sold by anyone without permits issued by the United Nations.

Malaysia, he said, joined efforts with other delegations at the United Nations to work towards a United Nations Arms Register to give the body comprehensive authority over disarmament.

On armed uprisings, he said the United Nations should take part in putting them down as democratic governments should only be brought down by the democratic process.

"We cannot preside over the disintegration of nations into ethnic communities particularly if military action had no role in the initial consolidation of a nation," he added.

The Prime Minister said some might ask why a tiny, developing country such as Malaysia should be advising the world on how it should be managed.

The answer to this, he said, lay in the fact that what some nations and individuals did could adversely affect Malaysia, for example, in the manner in which some developed nations considered it their right to dictate how others should be ruled.

They considered it their right to destroy the economy, impoverish the people and overthrow the government of developing nations. They latched on to various causes such as human rights and the environment

to reimpose colonial rule on such countries.

In this, they were helped by the Western media which also considered it their duty to tell developing nations how to rule, he added.

Dr Mahathir said developing countries could only seek refuge in the United Nations and the democratisation of its structure. Developing nations wanted to remain independent but conforming to international norms "as determined not by some NGOs or so-called democracies but by all the nations of the world".

The United Nations, the Prime Minister said, was the only legitimate instrument creating an equitable world, for protecting the poor and the weak from the pressures of the strong.

Touching on the need for a balanced constitutional relationship between the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Secretariat, he said the Malaysian delegation has joined efforts with other members of the United Nations to deliberate on measures to revitalise the organs of the body, including the General Assembly.

The experience of the Gulf conflict had made it imperative for the United Nations to explore and implement preventive diplomacy, including a more pro-active role for the secretary-general and expanded peace keeping operations.

Malaysia. Dr Mahathir said, also believed that the time had come for the international community to explore the potential of the International Court of Justice as a means of resolving conflicts through peaceful means and in accordance with the rule of law.