

# Don't condemn 'undemocratic' countries: PM

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From HARDEV KAUR:  
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COUNTRIES which seem to have problems and appear to be "undemocratic" should be **helped** and not just condemned. Ways must be found to educate not just the government concerned but the people as well.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad told the executive session of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) on the second day, that unless the people understands what democracy means, it could be counter-productive for the nation as a whole.

The talk on democracy should not be based on mere belief "as if it is a religion," he said, adding "that unless you know how to make democracy work, it is not going to work. So let us be tolerant here."

Briefing the press on the day's proceeding, Foreign Ministry secretary general Datuk Ahmad Kamil Jaafar said the Prime Minister also stressed that with the **end** of the cold war there was now the emergence of a "uni-polar" world.

In a uni-polar world "the option to defect is no longer available to us". "Lots of people feel that a one-party state is not democratic. I wonder what you feel in a **uni-polar** world, what is democratic. People should be given a choice. I hope we can have a multi-polar world, but I do **not** see anything in sight at the moment," the Prime Minister is quoted as saying.

He told the leaders that Malaysia fully supports **democracy**, but hoped that he will not be misunderstood "**when** I try to say that it is not the perfect system".

On the imposition of Western democratic standards on newer nations, the Prime Minister said during the emergence of **demo-**



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cracy of the Greek City States, 90 per cent of the people had no rights and they were slaves. Only 10 per cent of the population practised democracy.

Democracy, he added, had evolved through the years and reached a stage that we find now in developed countries. In some of these developed countries the stress is not so much on majority rights as much as it is on individual rights.

"We are still in the process of evolution". Countries need to be given time. The Prime Minister told the meeting that it is far more important that the community should have the rights, and that the majority should not subvert the rights of the majority.

"If you believe in democracy then you have to accept that democracy means, if not consensus, at least majority rule, but if you are taken up by minorities and by individual rights, it may well be that democracy would not bring about the kind of things that we expect of it, and merely becoming a democracy guarantees nothing," he added.

In a uni-polar world, the Prime Minister said, there was a feeling that countries have a right to look into the internal affairs of other countries when things go wrong and there is a feeling that there is no good government and no respect for human rights.

"I am fully supportive of this but what worries me is who decides. Who decides when a government is not a good government, or a good democracy?" Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir asked.

"While we, approve that we should look into the affairs of countries and reserve our right to act against them, we would like to see a proper mechanism for this," the Prime Minister said.

He added that the United Nations is the right agency to decide, and not just any country, however powerful, as there is bound to be bias and there may be other interests which come in when action is taken.

The Prime Minister also touched on the rule of law. He made no apology for Malaysia's laws. He stressed: "I have no apologies to make for hanging people **who smuggled** drugs into Malaysia. We will hang them and will continue to hang them."

While some people said there is no result, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said: "We are not talking about result, we are talking of crime and punishment, not deterrence alone but crime and punishment. We make no apologies for death sentences in Malaysia."

The Prime Minister asked what the response to his speech was, he said that a number of people welcomed it. They told him that **they** had thought of the same things but did not say them nor articulated them. As such they thanked him for saying the things that they had in their minds.

In fact, according to some delegates, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir is being looked upon as the "leader of the Commonwealth". He speaks on behalf of the developing countries, while most of them have the same feelings and thoughts but do not say them out **aloud**