

CNS1452

R GE 20-10 00189 EA938

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DEMOCRACY IN COMMONWEALTH UNDER CLOSER SCRUTINY THIS TIME

Democracy

From Kuah Guan Oo

HARARE, Oct 20th (Bernama) -- Like the incessant beat of the African +tom-tom+ drums, the question of democracy, good government, human rights and accountability will continue to reverberate **around the world long after** the Commonwealth Summit here.

This is so because these issues are going to be tied to the question of aid and trade by the developed members, such as Britain and Canada, which made their stand loud and clear from day one of the Harare Summit.

The beat of these linkages had been sounded well before Harare when major developed countries -- the United States, Japan and the European Community -- told developing countries to clean up their act or face withdrawal of aid and trade.

This drew a public outcry from Third World leaders who saw the threat as a high-handed attempt to impose a way of life on them, regardless of their unique problems. But, the move by the developed or donor countries was not unexpected. -- more

♥20/10/18-06MST

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Democracy 2 Harare

With the end of the Cold War and the retreat of totalitarianism or communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, a +uni-polar world+ in the words of Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir had emerged.

Herein lies the danger of the unchallenged power of the super powers which could impose its system and will on any developing or smaller states.

Before the Cold War, the smaller states would turn to the Soviet Union if they are spurned by the donor countries but now they have nowhere to turn to.

Within the 50-member Commonwealth, made up of Britain and its former colonies, ideals like democracy, good government, human rights and accountability are the essence of their government though more than 80 per cent of the members are still grappling with a crippling economy, political instability and, not least, a minimum standard of living and human dignity.

Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao said India, the world's largest functional democracy, would fail if its people continued to live in dire poverty and had no economic security. -- more

♥20/10/18-11MST

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Democracy 3 Harare

He told the developed members of the Commonwealth that it was very well for some of them to talk of democracy and human rights when many other Commonwealth countries were trying to raise the standard of living of their people.

Saying that +democracy+ was already working in many Commonwealth countries, he said they should not spend too much time trying to define democracy.

Instead, the Commonwealth should pledge itself to help overcome the problems of its developing members where there were +great inadequacies+ in their structures.

+Where will the developing countries go when democracy fails to deliver the goods. Developing countries have to have their own philosophies of progress,+ he argued.

In stark contrast, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney of Canada spelled out the stand of the developed or donor countries in no uncertain terms: Canada could not subsidize repression and stifling of democracy in Third World countries. -- more

♥20/10/18-15MST
R GE 20-10 00191 EA941
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Democracy 4 Harare

He said good government did not mean foreign styles but fundamental principles of pluralism. Democracy was universal, not western, and had to be respected, a view shared by Prime Minister John Major of Britain.

Noting that the Commonwealth had spent the last 33 years fighting apartheid in South Africa at the expense of economic development of its people, he said the member countries should now channel their resources to improve the lives of their people and champion the principles of human rights and democracy in member countries.

But Dr Mahathir, like President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, noted that there seemed to be different interpretations to what was meant by democracy. Britain of 50 or 100 years ago would not have qualified under the definition today.

In short, the Third World countries need to evolve and perfect their democracies.

Like Mugabe, he said any head on rush to embrace the model of democracies of the US, Britain and other western countries could set back whatever achievements and economic advancements of the emerging countries.
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♥20/10/18-21MST

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Democracy 5 (last) Harare

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir also expressed the fear, echoed by many other developing countries, of the **danger of unilateral imposition** of the present western concept of democracies.

He felt that there should be an agency, preferably the United Nations, to **decide Which** country was not practising these values before the developed countries cut off trade and aid.

Throughout all the great debate within the walls of the summit, what was clear was that the Commonwealth could pledge all it could about linking or not linking those democratic values with aid and trade.

But, at the end of the **day**, the question of aid and trade and **democratic values** would, essentially, be one between the receiving and donor countries, observed Commonwealth Secretary-General Chief Emeke Anyaoku of Nigeria.

This means that many of the Commonwealth countries are going to face a lot of problems with these issues, especially when their fragile and fledging economics are tied to the apron strings of their colonial masters.

-- Bernama

♥20/10/18-25MST