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Mahathir-democracy

DEMOCRACY MEANINGLESS IF THERE'S TURMOIL, SAYS MAHATHIR

(Embargo: For use after 6pm today, Feb 13)

from Azman Ujang 13

DHAKA, Feb 13, (Bernama) -- Democracy is not a guarantee for success for countries and will become meaningless if there is turmoil and disorder, Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today. *Drip over seas.*

The democratic system is only a means to an end but the ultimate goal should be social and political stability for economic development and well-being of the people, he said at a civic reception in which he was presented with the key to the city of Dhaka, on the second day of his three-day official visit to Bangladesh.

Dhaka Mayor Abbas Nizami presented the symbolic key to Dr Mahathir at the ceremony in front of Jatiyo Sangshad, the Bangladesh Parliament. Also present were Bangladesh Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, foreign ambassadors here and senior government officials.

The Jatiyo Sangshad is perhaps the most majestic and magnificent Parliament building in Asia, signifying Bangladesh's respect and commitment to the principles of democracy, which Dr Mahathir chose as the theme of his speech at the ceremony.

"Democracy cannot exist for the sake of democracy alone. Democracy is meaningless if it fails to enhance the well-being of the people and if turmoil and disorder becomes the way of life," the Prime Minister said. -- more

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Dr Mahathir said legitimacy in government attained through the democratic process should lead to the promotion rather than the regular disruption of legitimate social, political and economic activities.

"It is essential therefore that democracy and development in all fields go hand in hand without the former being a liability to the latter," he added.

In ruling out the democratic system as a guarantee for success for countries, he said each democratic nation, whether big or small, had still to shape its own destiny and find its own place in the international community.

He said each democratic country had to live with all its strength and resources and the weaknesses that it inherited.

It had also to be guided by the wisdom and vision of its leaders, the administrative skills of its bureaucrats, the entrepreneurial dynamism of its private sector, discipline of its students and workers, and the loyalty of its armed forces. -- more

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"Most importantly, perhaps, the support of its people. Hard work remains the key ingredient, without which no policies, however sound, could be successfully implemented," said Dr Mahathir in spelling out the recipe that would ensure the economic success for developing nations.

Dr Mahathir, described by the Bangladesh press as a strong leader of the Third World, said no developing country could however be expected to practise the so-called "perfect democracy" as is understood by the West.

"Indeed even for the West what is perfect today will be defective tomorrow," he said.

The Malaysian leader, whose country is one of the fastest growing economies in the world, called on developing countries to set their priorities right, prescribing the basic priority as the rapid economic development for the benefit of the people.

But Dr Mahathir said that expecting developing countries to forego development in favour of an alien concept of a perfect democracy could lead to the actual demise of democracy itself. -- more

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He called on countries to take the path of moderation and accommodation in all their actions, adding that exercising absolute democratic rights should not outweigh the need for stability and the general well-being of the people.

Dr Mahathir also said that in a world of inequitable distribution of wealth and opportunities, it was only fair to see those who were better off giving to those in need.

He again hit out at countries which used the aid they made to recipient countries as a licence as well as a condition to preach their policies to others.

"For this reason, Malaysia has struggled hard to free itself of economic dependence in order to make political independence gained in 1957 meaningful. It has not been easy or completely successful but then nothing that is worthwhile is easy to come by," he added.

As he put it: "Independence has a price. Nothing in this world or the next is free". -- more

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Turning to Bangladesh, Dr Mahathir said that with its strong commitment to a fair government and the support of its industrious people, rapid development would certainly come about.

Malaysia, he said, fully appreciated the many problems confronting the Bangladesh government, including natural hazards and calamities in the process of creating a progressive nation.

"In the final analysis, each nation has to fend for itself and respect from others can only be won if it can manage itself better than when it was governed by others," said Dr Mahathir. -- Bernama