

Dr Mahathir: We will uphold

Pledge on

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By Jeffrey Ramayah

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Malaysia will continue to uphold the principles of democracy but will avoid practising democracy in its absolute sense.

The Prime Minister said unlimited freedom was dangerous. In the country's plural society, riots could easily take place if the people were free to incite racial feelings, conduct street demonstrations, go on strikes all the time and indulge in other activities which were supposedly the rights of people of a democratic country.

Opening the 22nd Gerakan annual delegates conference here, Dr Mahathir said practitioners of democracy in the West were in actual fact undemocratic.

While these countries accused developing countries of not practising true democracy, they were not prepared to accept the voices and wishes of the majority in the international arena and in the United Nations.

Dr Mahathir said: "Even in their own countries, there is discrimination of the minorities and the coloured. Even their newspapers are lopsided and they do not grant freedom of speech to those they dislike."

Malaysia had never been given space in the Western media except for news that was damaging.

He said Malaysians should not be easily deceived by the so-called democracy practised in the West which had led to several incidents of chaos and disaster.

"Democracy is meant to serve society, and not society to serve democracy," added the Prime Minister who is also chairman of the Barisan Nasional.

Guests at the opening included MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik who was accompanied by vice-president Datuk Lim Ah Lek and secretary-general Datuk Dr Ting Chew Peh,

MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu and leaders of other BN component parties.

Dr Mahathir said the BN subscribed to the principles of democracy not just in national administration but in party matters as well. BN party leaders could change from time to time, but the stress of their struggles, based on democratic values, was retained by the new leaders.

He said: "I wish to stress that ideologies are not for the sake of ideologies, and that democracy is not just for the sake of democracy. Both are to serve the good of their followers."

"When ideologies are turned into 'religions' and adopted without due consideration of the end-results, then ideologies will be damaging. This is because ideologies are man-made and therefore not perfect; in fact, full of weaknesses."

The Prime Minister said the communist ideology too had its merits. But in the name of communism, governments had indulged in mass killings, abused power, made the people become more poor, governed through dictatorship, incited ill-feelings and even spied on their people.

At present, the West wanted its style of democracy adopted like a religion, at whatever cost. The end of the Soviet empire was one result of democracy hailed by everyone, but in its wake one saw wars and mass killings in Azerbaijan, Georgia, Belarus, Ukraine, Tajikistan and in Eastern Europe, where genocide was rampant in the rump Yugoslavia.

Dr Mahathir said that in the West, excessive democracy had resulted in gross moral decay with widespread cases of drug abuse, homosexuality, single parents and a suffering economy as a result of lax work ethics.

The West not only claimed to practise democracy, but wanted others to

accept and practise their bad habits and adopt their moral values which they said were democratic and unquestionable, the Prime Minister said.

Dr Mahathir said democracy on its own would not bring peace and prosperity. This was seen in the former Soviet republics where democracy brought with it disunity, riots, racial clashes, suppression, economic destruction and other weaknesses.

He said those who were familiar with democracy would not be able to use it to

bring improvement to their people. On the other hand, in China and Vietnam, where authoritarian rules were observed in a climate of economic reformation, the people were more successful and prosperous.

Dr Mahathir said: "What is obvious is that the West reaped vast dividends from those in the Eastern bloc who were attempting democracy. Today, the Eastern bloc is in tatters and weak, forcing it to beg from the West."

"This is what the West wants — not democracy, not

free trade and not 'human rights'. If a government administered with an iron fist is supportive of the West, then it is all right. The West will continue to protect its friends, even if they are not democratic," the Prime Minister said.

He added that fanatical democracy would not do the country and the people any good. The view that democracy should be retained at the expense of the people and the country was stupid.

democracy

principles but avoid pitfalls

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