

# Right form of democracy for success

From Calvin Goh

BEIJING, Wed. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today while Malaysia's success could not be achieved without a democratic system of Government, it would not have been possible without its particular form of democracy.

"Had we simply taken — lock, stock and barrel — a different democratic system that might have worked well elsewhere, we might today be in deep trouble," he added.

Speaking at the 1994 China Summit Meeting, he said: "I am certain that had we adopted the democratic system now in place in some Western countries, you may not have the Prime Minister of Malaysia in front of you today.

"He would be too busy dealing with riots and bombs in the Malaysian capital, assuming that a country called Malaysia still ex-

Foreign Trips  
ists." However, he said Malaysia's democracy was far from perfect and that was why it had specifically identified advancement towards a more liberal democracy as one of the nine modernisations of its generational plan called Vision 2020.

"But we are not weighed down by 'gridlock'. For almost all of our 37 years of independence, we have had stable and strong governments repeatedly elected by the people.

"With strong governments, we have been able to concentrate on doing what is right rather than what is popular. We have had leadership that was prepared to lead, that always had to satisfy the people but never to pander to the gallery."

He also said Malaysia did not have a democratic system where the public good had to be sacrificed to powerful lobby groups.

"We are unashamedly community-oriented. We do

not believe that the rights of the individual come before the rights of society," he said.

He added that in the country's elections, large percentages turned out to vote.

"Our majorities are not silent as in some Western democracies. We do not have constant, ultra-combative, confrontational politics.

"There has always been a strong consensual impulse."

He also said the Press in Malaysia did not believe that it was their job to hound politicians, to tell lies and to adopt at all times the superior stance of king-makers.

The ruling coalition party has also always been broad-based, bringing together the widest range of political parties, ensuring the widest ethnic and geographical representation.

"But a world which tolerates and even encourages ethnic cleansing in Bosnia

never tires of pointing out the inadequacies of Malaysian democracy.

"They seem unhappy that we are not assailed by the violence and instability that characterise most new democracies."

He said they would love to see "our government and policies change with each election, so that the uncertainties would deter investments for economic growth".

In East Asia, he said "we believe in democracy and we are anxious to practise it".

"But we also believe in strong stable governments that are not easily pressured."

He said the liberal democracies of the West had not produced strong stable governments.

On the other hand, the countries of East Asia, in wanting to catch up in terms of development with the West, need stability and predictability.