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Mahathir-Democracy

MALAYSIA ONLY PRACTISES DEMOCRACY FOR THE GOOD OF THE PEOPLE, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, May 11 (Bernama) -- Umno President Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Malaysia's system of democracy is democracy for the good of the people and the nation and not democracy for democracy's sake.

"Malaysia's democracy is not a religion. We are aware of the good of a democratic system but are not overzealous about it to the point that we accept without questioning everything that is done in the name of democracy," he said in his policy speech at Umno's 50th anniversary convention at the Putra World Trade Centre, here.

"We are prepared to criticise and accept criticism on the democracy that we practise," he said.

"If the people and the country benefit, then we will accept the practices which are said to be democratic.

"On the other hand, if the people and the nation get only the worst from any practice that is said to be democratic, we will give priority to what is good for the country and the people and put aside the question of whether or not it is democratic," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Umno was founded on democracy and had chosen democracy not as a strict ideology but because it was the best approach to further the cause of Umno.

The democracy practised in Malaysia was not like western democracy, he said, adding that the Western democracy was also far from perfect and contained elements of tyranny besides failing to produce the best results.

He said the West had made democracy into a religion, just like they had made the communist ideology a religion.

Because of democracy, anything done in the name of democracy could not be defective although the result was clearly bad, he added.

"Umno's constitution is not an ideology or political manifesto. It can be amended and indeed it has been amended several times. But the amendments must be made according to the provisions of the constitution enforced at the time of the proposed amendment", he said.

Dr Mahathir said that since Umno upheld democracy, it was important for Umno members and leaders to understand the strength and weaknesses of a democratic system so that they did not lose sight and destroy themselves.

He said many supposedly accepted democracy as a political system but because they did not understand what democracy was all about they became victims of democracy without benefiting from it.

"It must be remembered tht democracy is not God's religion. Democracy is a human creation and is therefore far from perfect" he said.

The West claimed that democracy was not defective and believed it was a system that no one could dispute or change.

"They come up with the slogan 'Vox populi, Vox Dei', which is, the majority voice is God's voice.

"But believe it, that democracy is not God's voice and is far from perfect. In fact, it is fraught with shortcomings which can destroy its practitioners and make them victims of the evils of democracy which is equally bad compared with a feudalistic or dictatorial system," the prime minister said.

The prime minister gave several examples of countries that practise various forms of democracy but are not peaceful and their people are suffering.

He said that for want of democracy, the Afghans toppled their monarchy

but today Kabul was destroyed and hundreds of thousands of Afghans were killed and murdered.

"The democratic nations of the West which have been preaching democracy only supplied weapons for the Afghans to kill fellow Afghans," Dr Mahathir said.

In an Asian country, he said, a military government was toppled for democracy but since then that country knew no peace.

The elected government could not govern because the opposition held demonstrations and staged strikes all the time.

"And if the opposition party wins and sets up a government, the old ruling party would take to the streets to demonstrate and stage strikes all the time to topple the new government. As such, the country will never be stable," he added.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia chose democracy because it believed the people knew how they should be governed.

Although Malaysia retained the system of monarchy, it no longer had absolute power, he said.

"That we practise democracy is also clear because the body that governs, that is the Cabinet, comprises representatives chosen by the people," he said.

The prime minister said Malaysia's system of constitutional monarchy which was taken from the British gave position to the King without denying the rights of the people.

However, he added, it was not the system that was important but the willingness of all parties to practise democracy in its true spirit, not merely according to the concept and rules which determine whether or not democracy was practised.

The prime minister said the people should choose a representative which would form the government based on ability, policies and programmes as promised by the contesting parties.

"If the people were to use their rights wisely, their representatives and government would comprise those who really have the ability and are efficient, sincere and responsible," he added. -- BERNAMA

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