

Muslims must devise new system of governance, says PM

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in Dubai**

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MUSLIM countries should devise their own system of governance suitable for their own people and should not be in a hurry to embrace democracy, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

The Prime Minister said this was because democracy, which is far from perfect, might bring about more damage than good as exhorted by the West.

Fielding questions from the floor after delivering his keynote address entitled *Meeting the Challenges of the 21st Century: Role of the Muslim Nations* at the Emirates International Forum here, Dr Mahathir

said democracy might not be suitable for all countries.

"I have seen one country forced to accept democracy. But now it is in shambles. People are jobless, migrating to other countries, fighting and killing each other," he said.

The situation there, he said, did not speak well for democracy.

Dr Mahathir said democracy should not be adopted in toto sim-

ply because it worked well in certain countries.

"This is the IMF (International Monetary Fund) mentality," he said, drawing loud applause and laughter from the audience who comprised 450 corporate leaders from the Arab world.

Dr Mahathir was making obvious reference to the IMF's failure in turning around economies in coun-

tries like Indonesia and Turkey by using the same methods it had used elsewhere.

The Prime Minister's remarks drew warm response from the audience who frequently interrupted his answers with loud applause.

Asked whether dictatorship

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would be good for certain countries, especially in the Middle East, Dr Mahathir replied: "The problem with dictatorship is that if you put the wrong dictator, it will be difficult to remove him. You will probably have to shoot him."

Dr Mahathir said giving the right to every citizen to cast votes also did not guarantee that the right Government was elected.

"Because it is always possible to buy votes, and it is always possible to get some public relations people to dress you up and make you look handsome, you get elected. It has nothing to do with the policies you pursue," he said.

He said in the United States, the greatest proponent of liberal democracy, the recent presidential election was even taken to court,

something that normally took place in Third World countries.

He said every country should be given the opportunity to choose its own system.

Earlier in his speech, Dr Mahathir said it was difficult to understand how democracy worked, especially liberal democracy.

"It is not the system that matters. It is good governance by good people that we need. And feudal kings, even dictators, have provided and can provide good governance."

"The only thing good about democracy is that theoretically at least, we can change Governments without violence," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that a good Government was not beyond Muslims as what they needed was a professional civil service, police and defence forces.

"They can all be trained and installed with the right spirit and the proper sense of duty to the nation."

Under a good honest leader, he said, be he a King, Prime Minister or President, helped by advisers and experts, a country could develop.

"If the Muslim countries are going to play a role in this century, they must first establish good Governments dedicated to developing the countries to achieve developed country status. We are not going to be able to do this overnight. It will take time, a lot of time, but it is possible," he said.

At the question-and-answer session, Dr Mahathir spoke on a myriad of issues including the need for Muslims countries to achieve their own globalisation process similar to the days of the Great Muslim Civilisation.