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LID-Mahathir (Democracy)

DR M SLAMS EFFORTS TO DESTABILISE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

LANGKAWI, Aug 1 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has hit out at the international media and liberal Western countries which work hard to undermine new developing democracies even to the extent of supporting efforts to overthrow governments.

They could not bring themselves to believe that the people in these countries had democratically elected the governments, said the prime minister.

"They cannot believe that the natives they had ruled before understand democracy or the rule of law," he said when opening the Global 2002 Langkawi International Dialogue at the Mahsuri International Exhibition Centre here tonight.

If the countries were stable and doing well, the international media and the Western countries accused the leaders as dictators, said Dr Mahathir.

"They fabricate stories that although the people support the leaders of these countries enthusiastically, actually they are forced to do so, to shake the hands of these leaders, forced to smile and shout their support," he said.

"Or they would report despite evidence to the contrary that these leaders were ignored by the people, that the people fear them," said Dr Mahathir, who is the Global 2002 host patron and adviser.

Some 400 government and business leaders, their spouses and young entrepreneurs are attending the four-day dialogue aimed at creating smart partnership to enhance security and prosperity for development.

"For the media and the Western governments, there is nothing right that these governments of the natives can do.

"And because they have convinced themselves through their own lies that these governments are bad, they would do their best to destabilise these countries.

"They would support and encourage anyone, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in particular, to overthrow the government," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the promotion of democracy might not be because democracy was good.

"It may be because democracy can destabilise us," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he was all for democracy because it was the best system of governance ever devised by Man.

"But it may not always work. People must be sophisticated and must know the limits if democracy is not to end up in anarchy," he said.

The great liberal democracies of the West have had some 200 years of experience, of trials and errors and frequent abandonment of the democratic system before it developed to the present state, he said.

Dr Mahathir said in most of these countries there were only two effective political parties and one or the other can achieve majority and set up a government.

"But the people in the new developing democracies only understand their rights and their freedom.

"For them, democracy means setting up any number of political parties in order to vie for political positions or for them freedom means saying anything against each other without regard to the sensitivities and consequences," he said.

The dialogue started today with a special session for heads of state

and government and fellows of the Commonwealth Partnership for Technology Management (CPTM).

Apart from the main session, parallel sessions for the various links would also be held. The specialised sessions would comprise civil servants/politicians, business, social issues, media and cultural groups.

-- BERNAMA

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