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Beware of 'new religion' in guise of democracy

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SHAH ALAM, Tues. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today warned of a "new religion" in the guise of democracy which had ended up stifling freedom.

The Prime Minister said that while democrats struggled for free choice including democracy in the era of autocratic rulers, "now no one is allowed to chose anything but democracy".

"If democracy is not chosen, then the democrats will apply sanctions, will take military action, including bombing and killing innocent civilians, until democracy is forcibly practised," he said when launching the joint conference of World Fellowship of Buddhists and World Fellowship of Buddhist Youth today.

In an apparent reference to Western dominance and the unilateral use of military might against terrorism, Dr Mahathir said the upholding of democracy itself had become undemocratic.

He said even the practice of democracy had been questioned with calls for "true democracy", followed by pressure being applied for the forcible adoption of more liberal ideas of the concept.

The Prime Minister said globalisation had also become a tenet of democracy in which the aim of making as much money as possible was paramount.

"Not only must we adopt the new religion called democracy, but also the worship of Mammon (wealth) which comes together with it.

"Globalisation is about making money. All else is not important.

"Nations should not exist, nor should national governments. If they exist, it is merely to enable the money worshippers to get at the money more easily.

"The governments are there to up-hold the rules that capitalists have formulated."

He described democracy and globalisation as beliefs and practices by the rich to make themselves richer.

He said they falsely argued that the poor would benefit from better goods and services provided by the free-market system, while ignoring the harmful effects on small businesses and the unemployed.

Dr Mahathir also spoke on the need for religion, saying that it was more relevant now in the age of science than when man was more ignorant.

"We should study, unravel and make use of the knowledge that science brings, but we should never be so arrogant as to conclude that faith and religion have no more place in this world."

He said those who still had faith in religion should pray and work "to bring them back to their senses".

On morality, he said it had seen a total collapse with extremists' views of human rights seen in same-sex marriages and children born out of wedlock.

"There is a total collapse of morality, so that all things prescribed by religions are now flouted with impunity. The injunctions of religions, the codes of human behaviour are now totally rejected.

"The most important creed is freedom of the individual. Any attempt to curb this absolute individual freedom is considered an abuse of human rights."

On his presence at the opening ceremony, he said there would be some Muslims who would criticise his involvement.

"Some will use this to condemn and accuse me of being an apostate. But

Islam recognises the right of other religions to exist. To you, your religion, and to me, mine."

About 500 delegates from 30 countries attended the joint conference, aimed at promoting unity among Buddhists and collaboration with other groups.

At a Press conference later, he said that although democracy had been abused to curb certain freedoms, it was still the best way to ensure freedom of religion.

He noted that religious tolerance was not enough but called for more inter-faith understanding.

"People should go back to religion and not let their emotions and anger get the better of them."

Religion had been tarnished because of human failures, such as Muslims involved in terrorism and the sex scandals involving Christian priests.