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Dr M: Devise own formula (HL)

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SET against an increasingly unipolar world, and hemmed in by multiple internal and external distractions, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Asia must devise its own formula of governance based on adapted democratic principles and sound economic policies and regimes.

The Prime Minister, addressing a conference on the future of Asia here, acknowledged that democracy is the best form of government, but Asian countries should adopt it gradually.

"The people must be allowed time to learn and understand the limits of democratic freedom and process. Democracy is for the good of the country. It is unacceptable to destroy the country and kill the people in order that democracy may be adopted.

"If a country is unable to practise liberal democracy then it should be allowed to be less liberal. The most important thing about a democracy is the right to change the government through the ballot box. Continuous disruption of public life through demonstration, national strikes, media excesses and the negation of the role of government may enhance the democratic ideology but they are not absolutely essential to the democratic process."

Consistent in his call for a new Asia based on its own set of values, Dr Mahathir said Asians must help each other to develop an acceptable form of government. It may not be as liberal as the governments of the West but it would still provide good governance in accordance with the capability and need of the country, he said.

As people prosper and are better educated and experienced, the system would undergo evolutionary change and emerge as equitable, fair and conducive to the development and well-being of the people and country, he argued.

The Prime Minister maintained that while others want to cannot step up their enforcement only when they are requested to and relax when there was no need. They should be on their toes all the time," he said.

Abdullah was speaking to reporters after launching the Small and Medium Industries One-Stop Solution 2003 at Putra World Trade Centre where some 160 companies took part.

Present was Health Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng in his capacity as the organising chairman of the event.

Abdullah said the decision to organise the workshop was taken at the Special Cabinet Committee meeting on good governance at Putrajaya earlier today.

The meeting came in the wake of the controversy over corruption allegations against Ampang Jaya Municipal Council enforcement officer Capt (rtd) Abdul Kudus Ahmad and the Ipoh City Council's decision to issue summonses for indecent behaviour.