

Dr M: M'sian politics 'not bad', no hurry for change
Malaysiakini.com
June 23, 2011

Malaysia's longest serving former prime minister Mahathir Mohamad said the country needs to find a balance between Washington's liberal democracy the limited democracy model utilised in China.

Describing Malaysia's political system as "not bad", Mahathir agreed there is room for development.

Mahathir, who led Malaysia for 22 years, said people are demanding change or transformation, but that may not be the right thing to do.

"Change and transformation is the catch word of today. Everybody is calling for transformation. However, one must ask whether this is always necessary or good for us."

"Change can be done if it can bring some good. We (Malaysians) have to gain your identity. I do not think (the present system) that it is too bad," he said.

Speaking on the topic entitled: "Malaysian Politics: Should it also transform with Economic Transformation?", Mahathir called for a study on the Malaysian system, which he calls the "Malaysian consensus".

The Washington consensus refers to neoliberal policies, which was influential in the United States and among mainstream economists, politicians, journalists and global institutions like the International Monetary Fund and World Bank.

The Beijing consensus refers to an alternative economic development model to that of the Washington Consensus of market-friendly policies, which represents plans for the developing world.

Defining Contrast between the two

Contrasting the two, Mahathir, a known critic of America, said the United States is a failed country as it changes leaders often, resulting in policies that are not stable.

Initially, he pointed out United States had brought about a lot of development but failed completely with the emerging of the new economies.

"It is now in double deficit with debts of US\$3 trillion. They just print more money to help the economy recover while killing many people in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya with the thought of bringing democracy to those countries.

"Initially liberal democracy started off bringing benefits, seen as a producer of great economic goods," he said.

However, the former premier said with Japan's transformation in the wake of the devastating war, it has transformed and reinvented itself and managed to produce the same goods but of better quality.

"Now the change has spread to South Korea, Taiwan and China. There is the thought that liberal democracy leads to prosperity, however, now Eastern countries have become richer in producing real products. Do we (Malaysia) follow Washington or Beijing? he asked.

"Beijing is not a liberal democracy but it had seen a fair change of leadership from Mao Zedong to Hu Jintao.

"China is having the riches of the world while Americans continue to face huge deficit. All this is because of the political system in China," he said.

Mahathir said Malaysia has a sizeable number of Chinese who had proven to be capable entrepreneurs resulting in the country becoming economically dynamic.

Promoting the Malaysian model

However, Malaysia's leaders of the past have moulded this country for the benefit of all races.

Here there are three major different ethnic group Malays, Chinese and Indians and 30 other different tribes in Sabah and Sarawak and also the Orang Asli in Peninsular Malaysia, said Mahathir.

He said Malaysia had seen guerillas (Communist) mainly led by the Chinese attempting to takeover the country and despite the May 13 racial riots, there has been no instability.

He described Malaysia's system has being aimed at ensuring that nobody gets everything that they are entitled to.

"If Malays want everything there will be nothing left for the Chinese. If we give everything to the Chinese, Malays will start an uprising."

"Hence, we have this system which has worked very well for us. If a single community is too happy then you know you are doing something wrong," he joked.

Hence, he said Malaysia should stamp its own identity on this world besides the Washington and the Beijing models. "Maybe he said we can call this the `Malaysian consensus'.

"This is our philosophy. Is it a bad system? I do not think that it is too bad. We must work according to our own mould," he said.

Press freedom under scrutiny

Today, the former premier said there is a lot of talk about press freedom but is it good?

"The press is seen as driving a wedge between different races. I see the race relations now is not that good compared to that dictator who ruled the country for over 22 years," he jibed.

He acknowledged that he is being seen as an ultra Malay and Islamist but he acknowledged that he had obtained Chinese support in 1999 in getting a two- thirds majority despite the black-eye incident.

A stronger majority, he said strengthens the ability provide more facilities to help restore development.

Mahathir said that is why Malaysia did not take loans from the outside but sourced them internally.

He confessed that the present political system needs some modifications but its not so bad as to warrant total transformation.

"But I do acknowledge we have to get rid of deficiency and clean-up the system," he said, adding that this includes getting rid of corruption.