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'Dictators can bring good'



Democracy might not work for all, says Mahathir

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KUALA LUMPUR: Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday if democracy does not work for the betterment of a country, an authoritarian system might be the answer.

"Democracy has failed in many countries. They have failed to deliver what they have promised. In the system of election for example, if you are to insist on 100% support to form a government, you will never have a government - that is why we have to be satisfied with a majority government," Mahathir said.

Speaking to about 300 people at an international forum here on "The Creation of a Global Citizen: Media Liberalisation and New Political Realities", he highly commended China for having become the world's number one economy despite authoritarian rule.

Comparing the Washington Consensus and the Beijing Consensus, Mahathir said China had proven that "having a non-democratic country can also give the people a good life - although once in a while they have to shoot the corrupt people".

"China has 1.4 billion people - very poor - but by applying the Beijing Consensus, they

have become the richest country in the world with US\$2.4 trillion (RM7.48 trillion)."

He said the reality in the political world is that there is a contest between the Washington and the Beijing consensus, and "in the long run, the latter might win".

"We might lose our voice, we might not be able to vote perhaps, but if we can find good leaders to run the country - even dictators can help a country develop very well. There is no democracy in China, but if you look at its progress and even the people, the system of government that they have can actually bring a lot of benefits," Mahathir said, comparing China to some democracies where the leadership changed frequently, without the country making any progress at all.

Mahathir, Malaysia's longest serving prime minister, then quipped: "Malaysia is said to have been ruled by a dictator for 22 years - I enjoyed it - but at least I think it has made some progress."

He said democracy is a man made thing and "not the perfect thing that it is touted to be".

The forum, attended by Umno Club chairmen and diplomats, is the first of its kind to be held in conjunction with the Umno annual general assembly which takes place on Thursday.