

Let's ^(P) uphold ²⁹

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UN ideals
-says Mahathir

UNITED NATIONS, Wed. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today called on member States to pledge themselves once more to the United Nations and what it stands for — a secure, just, prosperous and humane world.

Addressing the 39th session of the General Assembly, the Prime Minister criticised the movement denigrating the world body and the tendency among major powers to work, exclusively, outside the UN system.

What has happened, he asked, to the ideals of international cooperation and justice proclaimed by the founding fathers of the world body?

"We, who believe in them, want also to believe that the founder members of this organisation meant what they said when they proclaimed the Charter," he wryly noted.

Cynical attitude

The Prime Minister attributed the loss of interest in and cynical attitude towards the UN to the fact that the world body today could no longer be manipulated and manoeuvred — unlike the first 15 or 20 years of its existence when an automatic majority served a particular interest.

Now, he added, there is even the threat to withdraw from certain UN agencies.

Dismissing budgetary concerns as the prime cause of the cynicism towards the UN, Dr Mahathir pointed out that the small and poor also make contributions to the UN which, in relation to their own budgets, are substantial.

He said: "We do not like to see anyone squandering our money any more than the rich do.

"But what we would like to see is not savings through the destruction of the agencies but a thorough overhaul of the system to ensure that it is cost-effective and serves the agreed objectives."

Dr Mahathir also criticised smaller countries which alienated the major powers through wholesale imposition of decisions by majority vote.

He called for greater realism and restraint. "The fact is that," the Prime Minister observed, "the further development of the United Nations depends first and foremost on the attitude of the

major powers."

He appealed to member States: "Enough of cynicism. Enough of distortions and falsehoods.

"As we stand on the eve of the 40th anniversary of the United Nations, let us first of all pledge ourselves once more to the United Nations and, in that spirit, to a practical and realistic appraisal of where we can go from here."

The Prime Minister, who had earlier called on UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar and then on 39th UN

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Dr M on Western religious prejudices

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General Assembly President Paul Lusaka of Zambia, also reflected on a number of other contemporary issues: the Islamic resurgence, market access, the environment, Palestine, southern Africa, the situation in Afghanistan and Kampuchea, the future of Antarctica and the drug problem.

On Islamic resurgence, Dr Mahathir lamented deliberate distortions in the West about what is happening in the Islamic world such that ancient suspicions of and prejudices against Islam are aroused.

Aberrations and extremism, he said, are identified as characteristic of the faith to the exclusion of the true essence of Islam.

He asked: "Would it be fair to judge Christianity by the excesses of the Spanish Inquisition or by the obscenity of apartheid or Nazism?"

"Would it be fair to judge Judaism by the pervasities that political Zionism represents?"

The Prime Minister noted the long and turbulent history of relations between Islam and the West where many prejudices became ingrained.

These, he remarked, "are now being revived and fanned and exploited by the Zionists to serve political ends."

Dr Mahathir called upon Jews, Christians and Muslims alike to learn from one another to contribute even more to human civilisation than the three great religions already have.

He could not see any good reason for the wilful misrepresentation of the resurgence of Islam, "one of the most significant movements of our times."

He asked: "Who stands to gain from such misunderstanding? Why cannot we instead turn to each other and learn from one another, from our respective historical experiences, from our dreams and hopes and fears.

"It will be," Dr Mahathir declared, "a development of historic significance."