

Mahathir: UN must stay relevant

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Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today it was imperative that the United Nations remain relevant, its role enhanced and not subject to the interests of individual States or blocs.

"Despite misgivings that some may have of the United Nations, let us not forget that the UN can only be what we all want it to be," he told the UN General Assembly.

The reality was that a few wealthy and powerful nations had always, in spite of charges of "automatic majorities", "extreme" and "useless" resolutions, had the edge in shaping the United Nations.

The Prime Minister said if the UN had fallen short of expectations, the responsibility rested heavier on these nations which expected the or-

ganisation to serve only "certain perceived ends for certain perceived interests".

This responsibility also lay with the smaller developing countries.

Considerations based purely on ideological or political lines could not contribute to meaningful solutions.

Procedures

"As small developing countries, we must remain sensitive to our responsibilities just as we would wish the developed and powerful countries to base their decisions on the merits of a particular issue, governed by principles which are central to the ideals of the United Nations."

On the financial crisis plaguing the UN, Dr Mahathir said this came about because certain members were withhold-

ing their regular contributions and because of an over-staffed secretariat.

He commended the efforts of the Group of 18 to reduce the number of employees in the secretariat and to rationalise the organisation's administrative and budgetary procedures.

However, he could not agree with any rationale that the obligatory contributions by a member country could be withheld to force the acceptance of conditions unilaterally decided by that country's national legislature.

Efforts to change the rules must be undertaken within agreed procedures and in accordance with the existing system.

Any hint or suggestion that a member country, however big or small, could unilaterally impose conditions, could only bring about difficult precedents, Dr Mahathir added.

He remarked that certain quarters had said the UN was ineffective.

However, they remained strangely muted on some issues where the UN had indeed failed.

Dr Mahathir said in these instances, the UN failed not due to lack of trying, but because of obstacles which made many UN resolutions unimplementable.

"Simply put, they failed because of the attitude of the big powers," he said.

Dr Mahathir turned to the subject of terrorism and said this must also cover "acts of terrorism by Governments".

Intransigence

He said in many major world crises, most countries were reduced to mere bystanders, powerless to act or influence, save perhaps by their moral outrage and others' pleas and appeals.

Afghanistan was one example. It was being invaded and occupied by the Soviet Union, a permanent member of the Security Council upon which the world was expected to entrust questions of world peace and security.

"We must continue to condemn the Soviet action and that of its puppets just as the majority of the people of Afghanistan, despite the terrible odds, continue to fight and resist the aggression."

Similarly, the international community should never acquiesce to Vietnam's invasion of Kampuchea.

Dr Mahathir said Vietnam had persisted in its intransigence in rejecting all efforts for a peaceful solution.

"This is indeed an arrogant attitude, made no less so because of the firm backing that Vietnam has been getting from a superpower," he added.

In Central America, the superpowers and their proxies were just as active, trying to shape Governments and countries in their own images through subversions and provoking and directing rebellions.

"Is the majority in this organisation wrong when it condemns such acts?" Dr Mahathir asked.

"If there is an automatic majority, isn't there also a tendency on the part of the big powers to automatically use their brute strength when they dislike the stand of the majority?" — From LIM THOW BOON