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Mahathir-Veto

VETO POWER DENIES DEMOCRATIC RIGHT TO INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

PUTRAJAYA, Dec 17 (Bernama) -- The veto powers of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (United States, Britain, France, Russia and China) represent a loss to the international community, the Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

This was an obstruction to democracy among countries in international relations, he said.

He said this when commenting on the United States' use of its veto power to block a Security Council resolution which called for the sending of international observers to West Asia.

"I do not know why they objected. Last time also I wrote to President Bush asking that a UN team be there and again when I met him in Shanghai, I stressed on this matter but it appears that the US stand has not changed."

"This is what causes me to feel that the veto power is proving to be a loss to the international community. If there is to be a veto then it must be conditional," he said.

The Security Council resolution among others wanted international observers to be sent to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to monitor the situation following violent clashes between Israelis and Palestinians.

Despite the support from 12 Security Council members including France (permanent member) and Ireland, the resolution could not be acted upon because of the US veto.

The resolution moved by Egypt and Tunisia stressed the important role of the Palestinian Authority. It was tabled a day after Israel severed all forms of relations with Palestine President Yasser Arafat and labelled him irrelevant.

Dr Mahathir said as long as there was no UN military presence, Israel would continue to attack the Palestinian community and the Palestinians would retaliate with suicidal action.

He said the UN presence was needed to separate Israelis and Palestinians considering that negotiations would probably not take place again.

Latest reports from Hebron in the West Bank said Israeli troops shot dead a member of the Islamic militant group Hamas during a raid there.

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