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Mahathir-UN

CALL FOR REFORMS IN THE UN GAINING MOMENTUM, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

By: Jackson Sawatan

STOCKHOLM, Sept 24 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that the call for reforms of the United Nations is gaining momentum although superpowers with veto may prove to be a stumbling block.

"I think the momentum is gaining...even the Swedish Prime Minister (Goran Persson) was talking about it, that there must be reforms in the UN structure.

"But we note that the big powers are reluctant to give up...their veto, for example. If they veto any proposal for the reforms of the UN, if one country vetoes, then of course nothing can be done," he told Malaysian journalists here before leaving for New York after a three-day visit to Sweden.

"So we're in a 'Catch 22' position where there's nothing that we can do. But we have to voice our views," he said when asked to comment on the calls for reforms of the world body as world leaders meet in New York for the UN General Assembly (UNGA) beginning yesterday.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, for one, told the assembly that the time had come to choose either to maintain the international rules written after World War II, or to contemplate radical changes to the international security system.

Dr Mahathir is scheduled to deliver his address at the 58th session of the UNGA on Thursday.

Asked to comment on the statement by US President George W. Bush at the assembly yesterday where he called for countries to provide support in Iraq and to be formally committed to the US in securing a new UN resolution that "will expand the UN's role", Dr Mahathir said that Malaysia felt that the call was a bit too late.

"We know that a country, even though a superpower, cannot resolve problems by itself. That's why right from the outset there should have been cooperation from the other countries. But it's a bit too late in our opinion if the US were to seek the cooperation of other countries now," he said.

Asked whether he would address the issue at the UNGA session, the Prime Minister said that he would not have ample time to address the matter as he was only given seven minutes to speak.

"What can I say in seven minutes. It's too short...you just say the formalities and after that you can't say anything," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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