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PM: Our views justified (HL)

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PUTRAJAYA, Wed. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is pleased with United Nations secretary-general Kofi Annan's description of the UN Security Council as undemocratic but feels this will not change the "outdated power structure".

The Prime Minister said the criticism of the council and the UN in Annan's annual report to the UN general assembly was nothing new and long overdue.

He said the UN lacked the political will to institute drastic changes to its current structure.

"Anyway, we are happy that he has come around to our views. We have been saying this for as long I have been Prime Minister.

"That (Annan's remarks) was the same as the content of my first speech at the UN (on Sept 22, 1982). From then on, I've been saying that while we (developing and poor countries) are pressured into democracy and to be democratic, the developed nations are not democratic in international matters and problems.

"We know exactly what they (UN) should be doing. The question is whether they want to do it or not. There is no political will to do anything. They know that there is no reason for us to be bound by decisions which were concluded based on the outcome of a war 50 years ago (Second World War)," he said.

He was commenting on Annan's statement which, among others, called on the world body to institute radical reforms to remain relevant.

Speaking at a Press conference after attending a special briefing on preparations for the upcoming 10th Organisation of the Islamic Conference Summit at the Putrajaya Convention Centre here, he said the UN will continue to be ignored by the powerful nations.

"I don't think there will be much changes as I foresee that the UN will be ignored again because we have given them the veto power and they don't respect the veto power that they have. So there is no meaning at all. We can just go there and talk ... we become the talk shop," he said.

The five permanent members are the US, Britain, France, Russia and China.

Asked if he felt that the veto power system should be abolished, Dr Mahathir said that the powerful members of the UN may not agree with such drastic measures but they should collectively look into modifying the structure.

"It should at least be modified. Let's say if two permanent members (of the Security Council) plus three other members (non-permanent members) agree to stop something, then it can be considered.

"But now one single nation can block (the views) of 180 nations. It is very undemocratic for one country, no matter how big they are, to frustrate 180 other countries," he said, adding that developing nations should be represented in the Security Council on a permanent basis.

Dr Mahathir, who will be travelling to New York next week to address the UN general assembly, was also asked about the probable contents of his final speech at the world body as Prime Minister.

"I think my speech would be more or less similar to what Annan has said we fully support Annan," he said.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar echoed the Prime Minister's remarks.

"I hope Annan's remarks will become a struggle for change and hopefully that will be a good way to look at the restructuring of the UN," he told reporters when met at the same function.

Meanwhile, United Nations Special Envoy to Myanmar Tan Sri Razali Ismail said Annan was absolutely correct in labelling the council undemocratic.

"The UN cannot be truly democratic unless the five permanent members of the Security Council, with one most powerful, learn to share with others," he said.

Razali said there should be avenues for other member countries, besides the permanent members, to voice their opinions, especially on important issues of peace, security and unity.

"Action should never be undertaken by any one of the five countries alone ... this is what makes the UN so weak," he said.

Razali was formerly Malaysia's Permanent Representative to the UN.