

'UN could do more, but is short of funds'

NEW YORK: The United Nations has its failings, but all is not lost.

Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the multilateral organisation had not protected the poor from the scourge of war, but in other fields, it had done much better.

"It has contributed to better health, and alleviated the sufferings of some of the poor and the needy. It provides a degree of security and stability in places plagued by conflicts."

Speaking at the 74th UN General Assembly here on Friday, the 94-year-old said the UN could do more, but it was short of funds.

"Countries, including the very rich, are not paying their dues. It is shameful. We need to support the UN even though it has failed to prevent wars.

"Its work on health, education and social security makes the UN worth having," he said in his 11th appearance at the gathering of

global leaders.

It was reported that UN member states owed nearly US\$2 billion (RM8.4 billion) in peace-keeping funds, with the United States responsible for more than a third of that.

Dr Mahathir said the UN should play a major role in the restoration of failed governments. He said many countries had failed because the administrative machinery did not function well. Modern technology could help, but there was a need for good training.

"Countries and people should be allowed to retain their cultures and ways of life. Only if the way of life involves taking away the rights of people should there be international interference sanctioned by the UN General Assembly."

He drew applause from the audience when he brought up Palestine, condemned atrocities against the Rohingya and called

on nations to focus on climate change.

As for the UN Security Council, he said the time had come for the veto power to be modified if it could not be done away with completely.

"The veto should only be valid if two veto powers, together with three non-veto members, agree to apply it. This will reduce abuse of power."

Dr Mahathir said the US, China, Russia, France and the United Kingdom, which had the veto power, should not expect to always be above international laws and norms.

"We must resuscitate the original purpose of this great organisation, the UN. We must punish warmongers. We must make the world peaceful for all. That was our mission and that must remain our mission. Only if we succeed can we claim that we are civilised."