

Modify veto power to prevent abuse, says Dr M

NEW YORK: Calling for the United Nations to return to its original purpose of ensuring world peace, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad says the time has come for the veto power to be modified, if not removed completely.

The Prime Minister suggested that the veto should only be valid if two veto powers together with three non-veto members agreed to apply it, to ensure infrequent abuses.

"The veto powers should not think they would always be above international laws and norms," he said in his address at the 74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) here.

Dr Mahathir noted that five countries claimed victory in the Second World War and on that basis insisted on the right practically to rule the world, giving themselves veto powers over the rest of the world in the UN.

Noting the power wielded by the five permanent members of the UN Security Council - China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States - he asked: "How much longer should this group be allowed to exercise this power? How long, forever? The unspoken time frame seems to be eternal."

Dr Mahathir said that very power



Views that matter: Dr Mahathir addressing the 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly at the UN headquarters in New York. — Reuters

had resulted in an arms race, with each one of the five relying on their military might to challenge any attempt to take their power away.

The Prime Minister contended that the veto power was against all principles of human rights, which they themselves claimed to champion.

"Each one of them can negate the wishes of the nearly 200 other members. It's totally and absolutely undemocratic.

"Yet, there are among them those who berate other countries for not being democratic or being not democratic enough," Dr Mahathir said.

He said this killed the very purpose of the UN that they had created, and ensured that all solutions to

all conflicts could be negated by any one of them, frustrating all attempts at solving problems.

"We must resuscitate the original purpose of this great organisation - the United Nations. 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," he said.

"Three-quarters of a century is a long time. We cannot be held to ransom by events of the distant past," he added.

Dr Mahathir drove home the point that the current structure of the UN rendered it incapable of achieving its principal objectives -

that of preventing wars.

"Indeed, the structure enabled the promotion of war within countries and between countries," he said, adding that the UN had also failed to protect the poor from the scourge of war.

Brickbats aside, Dr Mahathir had words of praise for the UN's role in contributing to better health, alleviating the sufferings of some of the poor and needy, and providing a degree of security and stability in places plagued by internal conflicts.

"It can do more. But it is short of funds. Countries, including the very rich, are not paying their dues. It's shameful," he noted.

Dr Mahathir said nations needed to support the UN even though it

failed to banish wars, saying the world body's work on health, education and social security made the UN "worth having".

Thanking UN staff for their contributions in these fields, he pointed out that Malaysia had done its part by conducting peace-keeping missions in many countries.

"I look forward to the time when their services will no longer be needed, when countries are able to ensure their own security," he said.

Dr Mahathir also called on the UN to play a major role in the restoration of failed governments, explaining that many countries failed because the administrative machinery did not function well. — Bernama