

Modify veto power to prevent abuses - Mahathir

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From Muin Abdul Majid

NEW YORK, Sept 28 -- Calling for the United Nations to return to its original purpose of ensuring world peace, Malaysian Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the time has come when the veto power should be modified if it cannot be done away with completely.

He suggested that the veto should only be valid if two veto powers together with three non-veto members agree to apply it, to ensure less frequent abuses.

“The veto powers should not think they would always be above international laws and norms,” he said when delivering his statement at the General Debate of the 74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) here on Friday.

He noted that five countries claimed victory in the Second World War three quarters of a century ago, 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.

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

Dr Mahathir said that very power has resulted in an arms race, 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 the principles of human rights which they themselves claimed to be the champions.



“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 of the world for not being democratic or being not democratic enough,” Dr Mahathir said.

He noted that it 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 Organisation. We must punish war mongers. 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,” said the prime minister.

“Three quarters of a century is a long time. We cannot be held to ransom by events of the distant past,” the Malaysian leader said.



He drove home the point that the current structure of the UN renders it incapable of achieving its principle objectives - that of preventing wars between nations.

“Indeed, the structure had enabled the promotion of war within countries and between countries,” he said.

Dr Mahathir contended that the UN had failed in protecting the poor from the scourge of war but in other fields it has done much better.

He lauded the UN’ s role in contributing to better health, to alleviating the sufferings of some of the poor and the 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 observed.

Dr Mahathir said nations needed to support the UN even though it has failed to banish wars, as the world body’s work on health, education and social security makes the UN worth having.

Thanking UN staff for their work and dedication in these fields, he pointed out that Malaysia has been able to contribute by doing peace-keeping tasks 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.

He also called on the UN to play a major role in the restoration of failed governments, explaining that many countries have failed because the administrative machinery does not function well.

Modern technology can help but there is a need for good training, he said.

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