

PM: NAM needed to check West's control

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By WONG CHUN WAI and
LEE KAR YEAN

KUALA LUMPUR: The Non-Aligned Movement must continue to exist to act as a balance against the powerful dominance of the West, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

The Prime Minister said the developed countries were too strong and should NAM cease to exist, the world would be left with only the dominating North.

Dr Mahathir said the role and name of the 103-member movement could perhaps be reviewed but NAM was still relevant.

As to the application by

Myanmar to resume its membership, Dr Mahathir said no decision had been made.

However, if such an application was considered, conditions might be attached, he added.

He was speaking to reporters after chairing a Barisan Nasional supreme council meeting yesterday.

Dr Mahathir and Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi will attend the five-day NAM Summit in Jakarta from Sept 1.

The senior officials will meet on Aug 28 to prepare the groundwork for a two-day meeting of the Foreign ministers on Aug

29-30. The heads of government will meet from Sept 1 to 5.

The future of NAM and its role will dominate the summit as its relevance has been questioned in the light of the end of the US-Soviet ideological confrontation.

There have been proposals for NAM to shift its focus on economic challenges facing the Third World instead of political issues.

The movement was created in 1961 with the hope of becoming an effective alternative political force to the superpowers.

Former Indonesian Foreign Minister Prof Mochtar Kusumaatmadja has

proposed that NAM be renamed New World Order Organisation.

On proposals to impose sanctions against Myanmar, Dr Mahathir said several factors had to be considered including the effectiveness and whether the people of Myanmar wanted it.

He said Malaysia believed it was better to convince Myanmar through persuasion that a democratic government was better than an oppressive government.

"The people of Myanmar have not asked for sanctions. They are already suffering, so we do not think sanctions would be a good and effective

method," he added.

Dr Mahathir said in the case of South Africa, the people, especially the blacks, had demanded that the world impose sanctions on the regime.

He said there was no uniform standard application in the use of sanctions and that it must be viewed from a case by case basis.

On Sunday, Abdullah had said that Malaysia was against the proposal to impose sanctions against Myanmar as such actions would only block the return of the democratic process.

He said Asean would arrive at a solution through constructive discussion.