

NAM vital to counter power of 'North nations'

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. —

The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), which meets in Jakarta from Sept 1-6 is still a relevant body to counter the absolute power of the developed countries, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said NAM may be irrelevant in terms of definition and role but was still a useful group to counter other big groups.

"We see the developed countries in the North as having absolute strength and they need to be countered by another force so that there would be a balance," he told reporters after chairing a Barisan Nasional supreme council meeting at the Umno headquarters.

The Prime Minister, who is expected to attend the NAM meeting in Jakarta, was responding to questions on the movement's relevance following the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

Many Asean leaders had said that the role of NAM needed to be redefined.

The Jakarta NAM meeting is expected to be attended by about 100 developing countries.

Dr Mahathir said if NAM was so irrelevant that it had to be abolished, then it would leave the world with one "super-super power in the North which can do anything it pleases."

"That is why NAM is still relevant. Maybe we need to change its definition, role and even name but (it is inappropriate) to say it is irrelevant," he said.

On calls that sanctions be imposed on Myanmar to stop its anti-democracy oppression, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia would prefer a persuasive approach to sanctions.

He said sanctions could not be imposed on all countries because they would cause suffering to the peo-

ple.

Referring to the sanctions that were imposed on South Africa, he said there was no other way (force the country to dismantle its oppressive apartheid regime) and moreover, it was called by the people, especially the blacks.

As for Myanmar, he said

there had been no request from the people and furthermore, Malaysia felt it was not the best recourse.

"They (the Myanmars) are already suffering and we do not see sanctions good or effective. Our approach is to use persuasion and show that the democratic system is better than the Myan-

mar's system," he said.

Dr Mahathir said sanctions had to be considered on the basis of individual country's requirements.

He said besides considering the people's request, another factor to consider was whether it would be effective before a decision was made.