

Malaysia to take the lead

By Balan Moses

KUALA LUMPUR. Mon. Politics? Specifically the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, will feature prominently on the agenda at the 10th summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in Jakarta next week despite a consensus among member nations that the 31-year-old organisation shift its focus to the economic arena.

The political dimension assumes greater importance because of the recent carnage in parts of former Yugoslavia, ironically one of the founders of the NAM.

Malaysia is expected to lead the international campaign, currently gaining momentum among NAM members, to impress the need for

developed nations of the North to play a more concerted role in seeking a solution to the aggression mounted by Serbia against Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, a vocal and active proponent of the troubled territory's right to self-determination, has already indicated Malaysia's unequivocal stand on the issue by severing ties with the Government in Belgrade.

Malaysia will take up the issue at the senior officers' meeting on Thursday and Friday.

The meeting is normally a barometer for the stance assumed by heads of Government at NAM summits.

Dr Mahathir, who is lead-

ing the Malaysian delegation, is being widely regarded as the spokesman at the summit for the Bosnian cause and member nations are expected to be looking towards his leadership on the issue.

Many are banking on the Prime Minister's gift in dealing with delicate international issues in a forthright but diplomatic manner, given the fact that the rump Yugoslavia will be present at the meeting.

Further compounding the issue is the fact that Yugoslavia was the chairman of the movement until the NAM Foreign Ministers' meeting in Larnaca, Cyprus, in February when "it requested that the post be handed to Indonesia.

Indonesia, while duty-bound to accept the rump Yugoslav Government's presence at the meeting, will also be under pressure from NAM members to ensure the latter is not the successor to the erstwhile Yugoslavia.

While Dr Mahathir's attention and, indeed, that of other NAM members is focused on the erstwhile Yugoslavia, economic issues will not be neglected.

Rather, the meeting is expected to mark a new era in the history of the movement, a development that saw its birth at the last summit in Belgrade when member nations highlighted the crying need for greater economic co-operation within NAM.

There was overall agree-

in Bosnia issue at summit

ment that the movement should be more action-oriented, especially in dealing with economic and social issues.

Given the shift in the world order today following the end of the Cold War that gave rise to the current unipolar environment and, in this light, subsequent questions from some members about the movement's *raison d'être*, the gradual but inexorable move towards Third World economic solidarity is evident.

The world of NAM founders President Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia, President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, President Sukarno of Indonesia, Prime Minister Jawarhalal Nehru of India and President Gamel Abdel

Nasser of Egypt is no more.

After nearly 25 years of political bias, the Jakarta meeting is being seen as the watershed in the NAM's history. The movement, among the largest grouping of nations, has an unfortunate record of being better known for its political rhetoric than action.

It is this sad fact that members will seek to change.

In the fore will be Dr Mahathir who is also expected to impress on member nations the importance of mutual economic co-operation in ensuring that Third World countries do not lose out on development to the powerful North.

It is a favourite theme with the Prime Minister

who has repeatedly enunciated the need for economic strength among Third World nations. At the United Nations last year, he took pains to point out that the South wanted a democratic world order with all nations having the right to development and progress.

Also expected on the agenda is discussion on the possibility of a NAM secretariat. The NAM Committee on Methodology is in the process of examining the necessity for such a mechanism.

Malaysia, it is understood, is open to the idea of a secretariat but will adhere to the majority decision on the matter. Its stand hinges largely on the premise that such a mechanism may help

the movement realise tangible results and, in the process, disprove its detractors.

The summit will also examine other political issues including the Cambodian situation, posturing in the Middle East and developments in the fractured former Soviet Union.

Other economic issues on the agenda will include the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations, the North American Free Trade Agreement (Nafta) and the East Asia Economic Caucus (EAEC).

The senior officers' meeting will be followed by the two-day Foreign Ministers' meeting in which the Malaysia delegation will be led by Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.