

Outlawing nuclear weapons, enhancing co-operation, restructuring U

PM on NAM's three priorities

From
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in Cartagena,
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DATUK Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad listed three priority items on the Non-Aligned Movement's immediate agenda — outlawing nuclear weapons, enhancing economic performance and the restructuring of the United Nations to make it more democratic.

The Prime Minister called on NAM member countries to confront and overcome their own weaknesses and efforts be made to strengthen its think-tank operations.

These measures, when effectively and collectively executed, would prove to the rest of the world that NAM was still alive and cohesive and could play a major role in facing the challenges of the post-Cold War era.

Dr Mahathir said this in his speech at the opening of NAM's 11th Summit here yesterday. In a speech which spelt out Malaysia's position vis-a-vis the movement's agenda, the Prime Minister gave his frank assessment of the situation facing not just NAM members but also the world at large. He said: "The domination of the world by a select few remains. This is evident in their control of the international institutions that deal with issues of world security and economy.

nuclear powers to defuse, decommission and destroy these weapons. Already we are seeing the rusting nuclear warships probably with nuclear weapons abandoned carelessly at their bases.

"We know some nuclear submarines have been disposed of by sinking them in the sea... it should be noted that the disposal of chemical weapons and atomic waste in the Irish Sea after the war is already creating problems for the littoral states.

"Improper disposal of massive quantities of nuclear material and weapons may cause a disaster of frightening proportion," the Prime Minister said.

Dr Mahathir's advise to NAM members on nation-building issues started with his view that political freedom has not cut loose the economic chains. He added that despite becoming independent and sovereign, many countries in the South

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continued to be economically weak and dependent on the North.

High levels of poverty — manifested by low levels of life expectancy, literacy and per capita income — pose the greatest threat to the very existence of many developing countries, he said.

19 OCT 1995

"The fundamental challenges to our movement remains that of addressing the domination of the world by a select few, now no longer divided into blocs, whose decisions are primarily dominated by their own narrow national interests.

"NAM, on behalf of the South, will continue to champion the just cause for a new world order based on the principles of justice, equality and democracy in international relations."

Dr Mahathir said NAM must join forces with those outside its movement and continue to struggle for total nuclear disarmament. NAM, he said, must be at the forefront of humanity's efforts to outlaw nuclear weapons, as chemical weapons have been outlawed.

"We must ban nuclear weapons now for we doubt the future capacity of the

The Prime Minister said: "Before the South can collectively demand that it be taken seriously as a partner, and a player in the international arena, it must confront and overcome its own weaknesses.

"Ethnic, tribal and religious differences have led to the collapse of many governments, often culminating in brutal and protracted civil wars. The freedom that we gained at great cost and sacrifice has been squandered by many of us.

"There is no place in our societies as there is no place in any society for genocide, ethnic cleansing and other forms of oppression. Development, eradication of poverty and upliftment of our people, must be the overriding goals of the process of

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'Make a goal of sustaining national integrity'

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nation-building in the South."

The Prime Minister remarked that many countries had spent billions of dollars on armaments and weapons of destruction whereas the money should have gone to fighting the result of poverty, that is, malnutrition, illiteracy and diseases.

In this regard, Dr Mahathir said the goal of sustaining national integrity would be better pursued through effective dispute settlement mechanisms at regional level and without external interferences.

Stressing that "we have to do the right things for ourselves", the Prime Minister called on member countries to undertake internal reforms aimed at removing some of the disincentives in their

If member countries are prepared to do this, they would

dependence on the developed nations and would be strengthening themselves and the movement as well, he said.

The Prime Minister told the summit that the role of think-tanks in the advancement of the movement's collective interests and positions need also to be recognised.

In this regard, Dr Mahathir said efforts must be made to strengthen the South Centre which was established after the South Commission had completed its work. Without turning the centre into another bureaucracy, it should be lean yet able to reach out through the networks in member countries, he said.