

PM: Vital to grasp NAM's potential

**From
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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, in his closing remarks representing Asia at the Non-Aligned Movement's Summit, said yesterday it was important for member countries to understand the movement's potential.

Having done that, they should then know what to make of it, Dr Mahathir said, adding that he noted member countries realised that "we must act and act together to resist marginalisation."

The Prime Minister said: "It is fitting that here, in Cartagena, Colombia, we reaffirm our faith in the NAM

and its relevance as the major institution through which the interests of the developing countries can be protected and promoted.

"I believe that we have gone beyond the mere expression of the solidarity that we in the South have advocated but have not always practised.

"We have demonstrated that we can work together in a determined manner, that we are collectively prepared to address our failings and become a force to be reckoned with globally.

"In the years ahead, we will be tested over many issues, whether as a movement or as individual nations, and we will have to demonstrate our solidarity

and our will to sustain our independence."

Consistent with his earlier statements, the Prime Minister said: "Our platform is the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions and other international forums and our wish is to see these institutions reformed and restructured to reflect the needs of the global community of which we represent a significant majority.

"We recognise that there must be fundamental changes in the governance of these institutions to accommodate our voices. Of course, if there is to be credibility in our proposals, we ourselves must practise them transparently before

hand."

He added that the Summit had taken a firm position on disarmament, especially nuclear disarmament. This was done because of the movement's rising concern over the action of the nuclear states which continue to flaunt their weapons of mass destruction even as they manoeuvred to maintain their monopoly of them, he said.

He said that NAM's coordination with the Group of 77 had enabled the movement to further develop the premisses of its economic position, particularly the need for development to remain at the top of the global agenda and not be sidelined by the rich countries seeking

to advance their own agenda of social and environmental issues at the expense of development.

"We have emphasised the need for common action on international trade against rising protectionism in the industrialised world and its manifestations, especially the attempt to introduce new conditionalities in the form of environmental and labour standards.

"At the same time, we have shown that we are willing partners who are prepared to work with others for the good of all, for what we believe can only benefit all countries and lead to a more just, equitable and secure world," the Prime Minister said.