

(SUN 30 SEP 2002

India: Dr M will lead NAM to greater heights

KUALA LUMPUR: India, a founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), is confident Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will provide new impetus and steer the movement into a new era.

Indian Foreign Minister Yashwant Sinha told Bernama Mahathir is known in the international arena for his independent thinking.

"I am confident that, in collaboration with leaders of other NAM countries, it will be possible for him to provide the movement with new impetus and establish its role in a unipolar world," he said during his visit here, which ended on Friday.

Sinha said India looked forward to

Malaysia's chairmanship of NAM and would cooperate to make the movement relevant in today's world.

Sinha noted that New Delhi and Kuala Lumpur shared similar views on many international issues.

"The years ahead are going to be challenging in the international arena, so Malaysia will have to play an important role in world affairs," he said.

"In that context, NAM should work closely with G-77 (Group of 77, a loose coalition of developing countries). We would also look forward to Malaysia taking the initiative and providing the leadership in this area."

If NAM wanted to play its role in evolving a more democratic and equi-

table global order, it had to involve itself more directly in economic issues and, at the same time, not neglect issues like investment, technology and ideology.

On NAM's relevance in a fast-changing globalised world and with the end of the Cold War, Sinha said: "I think NAM is far from finished. NAM has a very important role to play on behalf of its developing members and NAM will continue to be very relevant in international affairs."

Formed in 1961, NAM has 114 members, making it the largest bloc for developing nations. The 13th NAM summit would be held in Kuala Lumpur in February.