

07 JAN 2003

MAHATHIR-NAM

DR MAHATHIR: NAM HAS PIVOTAL ROLE IN PROMOTING HUMANITY AND WORLD ORDER

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 7 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad says that the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), whose members form an overwhelming majority in the United Nations, has a pivotal and undoubtedly central role to play in promoting humanity and global order.

Far from being obsolete in the contemporary world order, the Prime Minister said that NAM's challenges today were inexplicably varied and remarkably gargantuan in scale and scope.

They included the reduction of abject poverty, the risks to the environment, the marginal situation of huge numbers of people around the world, the menace of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and global threats to human health.

No less important were natural disasters, violations of human rights, fundamental guarantees for the individual and the world problem of dadah trafficking, he said in a message on the NAM Business Forum from Feb 23-24, 2003, contained in a statement issued by its organiser, Asian Strategy & Leadership Institute (ASLI).

The Prime Minister said he welcomed the initiative by ASLI and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in organising the Business Forum alongside the 13th NAM Leaders' Summit from Feb 20-25, 2003, and expressed the hope that participants would have a fruitful discussion.

Malaysia is hosting the 13th NAM Summit which would be held at the Putra World Trade Centre while the business forum would be at the Sunway Lagoon Resort Hotel.

Dr Mahathir said that given the challenges confronting NAM, it was therefore imperative for member countries to stand united in efforts to promote mutual growth, development and prosperity.

This was especially so when the need for the establishment of an open, rule-based accountable, just, equitable, development-oriented and non-discriminatory global system of economic relations was greater than ever for developing countries today, he said.

He said that the world today was a significantly different place to the one where the original Asia-Africa conference was held in Bandung, Indonesia in 1955, and from where NAM originated.

Then, Third World leaders shared their similar problems of resisting the pressures of the major powers, maintaining their independence and opposing colonialism and neo-colonialism, particularly western hegemony.

Since then, Dr Mahathir said that sweeping changes have reshaped the world order, created new rules of the economic game and redefined boundaries of human cooperation and interaction.

ASLI said in the statement that the high-level NAM Business Forum to be organised jointly with Wisma Putra and the Malaysia South-South Association (MASSA) was aimed at further enhancing South-South cooperation.

Dr Mahathir is expected to deliver the keynote address at the forum to be followed by a special NAM Leaders session focusing on "Remaking NAM, Enhancing Cooperation" during which several heads of government from participating countries have been invited to speak.

The forum, to be attended by delegates from 50 countries, would also focus on enhancing regional and national competitiveness, strategies to sustain growth performance, bridging the developmental trade and digital divide as well as NAM's changing role in a changed world environment. --

BERNAMA

MR FR