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NAM-Chairmanship

LEADERS LEAVE WITH HIGH EXPECTATIONS OF MALAYSIA'S LEADERSHIP

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 26 (Bernama) -- Leaders of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) are placing high hopes on Malaysia, as its chairman, to transform the 116-member movement into a well-respected grouping.

Several leaders told Bernama that Malaysia's leadership of NAM under Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had come at a time when the developing nations were facing many uncertainties and challenges.

They said Dr Mahathir had the skills and experience to steer the movement in a new direction, giving priority to South-South cooperation and enhancing North-South relations.

Papua New Guinea Prime Minister Sir Michael Somare said Malaysia would have a big impact on the movement as Dr Mahathir was known for championing the interests of the least developed and developing countries.

He said Dr Mahathir had been doing a good job for Malaysia, a trait that could be put to effective use for NAM.

"I believe he is forthright. He always stands up for his principles," he said.

Mozambique's President Joaquim Alberto Chissano, who described the summit as "very good and well organised", said NAM member countries could expect a new impetus and resolve to work together to solve problems like the Palestine issue.

He said that under Malaysia's leadership, the movement would be in a better position to deal with the problems of Third World countries.

"We understand that if we are together and firm we can engage our partners outside the movement and change their perception towards us," he said.

Vietnamese President Tran Duc Luong described the summit as "a great success" and said Vietnam would continue to play an active role in the grouping of developing nations.

"With the leadership and chairmanship of Dr Mahathir and Malaysia, we believe the movement will make further strides and continue to achieve its objectives," he said.

Palestinian Foreign Minister Farouk Kaddumi said the Palestinian cause would get more attention and focus from NAM under the chairmanship of Malaysia.

"The Palestinian issue was one of the priorities here. We greatly appreciate the political and material support we received. Dr Mahathir and Malaysia know how to analyse this problem," he said.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Dr Naji Sabri said Iraq was expecting a lot from Malaysia's leadership because the country was known for its active role in international bodies, including the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC).

"We are optimistic Malaysia will present more to the movement's revitalisation, and we pray to God to help Malaysia...(because this is) not an easy job, especially at this juncture of the history of mankind," he said.

Tanzanian President Amani Abeid Karume said Dr Mahathir was a pragmatic and practical leader who could transform NAM into an effective organisation.

"Well, I expect NAM to transform itself into a better organisation. I believe he can use his skills, which he used to bring success to your country, to bring more success to NAM," he said.

Maldives Foreign Minister Fathulla Jameel, who praised the organisation of the summit, said Malaysia had always been positive and constructive in its views on NAM and other organisations.

"I have been a foreign minister for 25 years and attended many meetings but the arrangement here is typical of Malaysia; the sense of professionalism," he said.

Colombian Foreign Minister Carolina Barco Isakson said Dr Mahathir, being a leader with vision, would be able to transform the movement into an effective organisation for the developing world.

Egyptian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Fayza Aboul Naga said his country was happy that Malaysia had taken over the helm of NAM at a time when the world was full of uncertainties.

"It is actually a blessing for NAM to get the leadership of Malaysia. I want to put on record our great appreciation for the tremendous efforts Dr Mahathir put into the revitalisation of the movement through his speech because that is the recipe for the next three years and beyond.

"The Prime Minister has put forward a position that I am sure each and every member will subscribe to fully. We hope Dr Mahathir and Malaysia will take and lead NAM towards revitalisation and activation of South-South cooperation," she said.

A record 62 heads of state and government attended the summit, which ended last night.

-- BERNAMA

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