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NAM-Host

MALAYSIA HOPES TO ORGANISE THE BEST EVER NAM SUMMIT

By: Harlina Samson and Mohd Arshi Daud

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 13 (Bernama) -- As tension mounts in West Asia with the United States intent on attacking Iraq "to disarm it", Malaysia on the other hand is going ahead full steam to organise the best ever summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

With just a week to the event, there is a hive of activity at the Putra World Trade Centre, venue of the 13th Nam Summit from Feb 20 to 25. At least 52 heads of state or government of NAM nations are expected to attend.

At the last NAM summit in Durban, South Africa, 45 heads of state or government out of 114 member nations were present.

"This can be considered a feat because we have had only about six to eight months to organise it," said Foreign Ministry Secretary General Datuk Ahmad Fuzi Abdul Razak during a recent interview with Bernama.

Normally, a member country is given three years to prepare the triennial event, with most of the summits being held in September.

Explaining what had actually happened, Ahmad Fuzi said Bangladesh was supposed to host the meeting, a decision made in Durban.

However, when former Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina lost in the general election, the new government declined hosting, citing financial constraints.

It was then passed to Jordan but because of the continuing Arab-Israeli conflict, that country found that it was not in a position to host the summit.

Only after that, Malaysia was asked by a number of member countries including Jordan to should the responsibility.

Under the circumstances, Malaysia was unanimously endorsed by the NAM member countries to host the summit at the NAM Coordinating Bureau meeting also in Durban in April last year.

"Malaysia has enjoyed good standing internationally and this is something that we need to nurture, maintain and sustain because many countries feel that we are positioned not only to organise it well but are also able to contribute from the point of view of substance and to take certain initiatives useful for the movement," said Ahmad Fuzi.

Malaysia will chair the movement for three years, starting from the date the summit is convened until the convening of the 14th summit.

Ahmad Fuzi said it would be Latin America's turn after Asia to hold the chairmanship and Cuba is hoping to host the next summit.

Cuba is hopeful that during the last day of the KL summit, consensus would be reached to this effect but it all depends whether Cuba receives the unanimous support and endorsement of member countries, he said.

On preparations for the KL summit, he said event organisers, from various ministries, were fine-tuning the arrangements.

He said the government was providing all that was needed such as transport, accommodation and hospitality during the summit and making efforts to ensure the delegates had a comfortable stay in Kuala Lumpur.

"So far we have been able to accommodate the various requests made by those who will be attending the summit in terms of accommodation, security, medical facilities and so on," he said

He said some 8,000 police personnel would be mobilised to provide security at all the event venues, including hotels and the KL International Airport in Sepang.

On the summit's opening ceremony on Feb 24, Ahmad Fuzi said the delegates would be greeted by the Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, on arrival at the PWTC. The delegates will be entertained to a spectacular display of Malaysia's colourful cultures.

"A song composed by Datuk Ahmad Nawab entitled NAM Leading The Way, will be sung by evergreen pop-singer Khatijah Ibrahim at the opening ceremony."

"We hope to popularise the theme song and if we can sell this as a theme song of the NAM it will be great... we hope member countries will accept it," he added.

-- BERNAMA

HS/MAD MFJ AAM