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NAM: MALAYSIA BEST POSITIONED TO LEAD NAM, SAYS TIMOR LESTE

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 22 (Bernama) -- Timor Leste, which is set to be the latest member of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), feels that Malaysia is best placed to lead the 114-member, 47-year-old organisation for the next three years.

Its Foreign Minister, Jose Ramos Horta, said this was because Malaysia, under the leadership of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, had had vast experience in dealing with racial and religious issues.

"Malaysia is best placed to foster dialogue among cultures and civilisations at this very critical time," he told reporters on the sidelines of the 13th NAM Summit here today.

He said that after the Sept 11, 2001 terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in New York, there seemed to be a "clash of civilisations almost happening by default."

On the future task of NAM, he said the movement could encourage sustained dialogues among countries to eliminate misunderstandings and cheap propaganda created by extremists.

"If we do not do something about this (misunderstandings and cheap propaganda), the terrorists would win the propaganda war, and they would influence and manipulate the mainstream Muslims, saying that the West was against them," he added.

Horta believed that besides fulfilling the economic and social agenda of NAM, Malaysia was very well placed to lead, moderate and bridge the divide between the various regions, religions and cultures.

Timor Leste, which gained independence in May last year, will join NAM at the Summit next week along with Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

-- BERNAMA

SR MFJ YBY