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NAM-Namibia

NAM WILL BE STRONGER UNDER MAHATHIR'S CHAIRMANSHIP

By: R. Ravichandran

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 25 (Bernama) -- The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) will be further consolidated and strengthened under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Namibian President Dr Sam Nujoma said today.

There would be enhanced South-South cooperation during the next three years of Malaysia's chairmanship, he told Bernama in an exclusive interview on the sidelines of the 13th NAM summit here.

"The movement of the non-aligned countries under Dr Mahathir Mohamad is in very good hands," he said.

Dr Nujoma said as an experienced leader, Dr Mahathir would surely promote and work towards not only South-South cooperation but also greater North-South cooperation in the interest of NAM countries.

He said Dr Mahathir was known for his efforts in working for the common good of less developed and developing countries and as such, the NAM countries could expect efforts for the promotion of more trade cooperation as well for the peace and stability of the world.

Replying to a question, Dr Nujoma said Namibia and Malaysia could work together in contributing to the progress of NAM through consultation as Namibia is also a member of various African organisations such as the African Union and Southern African Development Community.

The African continent makes up the largest group in NAM with all its 53 countries represented.

Dr Nujoma said NAM was bound to have differences of opinion due to its large membership of 116 countries from various continents.

"So, therefore, differences of opinion are bound to arise. But on major issues like maintaining peace and stability and promoting trade and cooperation...this, I think we all are united," he said.

Dr Nujoma said the promotion of peace and stability among NAM countries was very important as a prerequisite for economic development.

According to Dr Nujoma, the strengthening of South-South cooperation and better economic relations among NAM countries were vital for the improvement of living standards in these countries, especially in areas like poverty eradication.

"With that, I expect the South to be in a strong position in dealing with the North in economic development (issues)," he said.

Dr Nujoma also said he did not think that the movement had any failure in its history as it had played an important role in the decolonisation process of many African and Asian countries.

The 74-year-old leader is Namibia's first president after the country gained independence in 1990. He led the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) struggle against white rule for more than 25 years.

As a leader of the liberation movement, Dr Nujoma attended the Bandung Conference in 1955, where NAM was formed, and the first NAM summit in Yugoslavia in 1961.

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