

23 FEB 2003

NAM-MAHATHIR (DOMINANCE)

NAM TOLD TO CLOSE RANKS AND ADOPT COMMON STAND

PETALING JAYA, Feb 23 (Bernama) -- The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) member countries must close ranks and adopt a common position to shield themselves against the domination of the world by a select few, said NAM upcoming chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad here, today.

The Prime Minister said that the fundamental challenge to the movement was to address this issue in an environment or a unipolar world.

"We have lost the option to defect to the other side. The only way we can protect ourselves is to close ranks and adopt a common stand," he said when opening the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Business Forum here.

The two-day forum, held at the Sunway Lagoon Resort Hotel, here deliberates on critical issues related to economic relations among NAM members and also seeks to find ways towards the formation of joint ventures among South-South countries.

It runs parallel with the six-day 13th NAM summit ending Feb 26 being held at the Putra World Trade Centre in Kuala Lumpur.

The Prime Minister said that the dominance of these countries was evidence in their control of the international media and institutions that deal with the world security and economic issues.

"The Security Council and the Bretton Woods institutions remain under the firm grip of a few countries.

"The domination now extends into the imposition of their values and standards in total disregard for the cultures and tradition of others," he added.

NAM was formed during the cold war by developing countries to be the third force between the two superpower blocs, namely the US and the former Soviet Union.

Dr Mahathir called on the 114 NAM countries "to send a clear message" to its detractors that the movement was still relevant and intends to assume a major role in the post-cold war era.

NAM, he said is a major consultative forum for developing countries to coordinate positions on crucial political and economic issues.

"It is still the only forum where Heads of State and Governments of the South can meet to take stock of developments which affect all of us.

"NAM, on behalf of the South, will continue to champion the just cause for a new world order based on the principles of justice, equality and democracy in international relations," he said.

However, the Prime Minister said that before the South could collectively demand itself to be seriously considered as a player in the international scene, it must overcome its own weakness.

Ethnic, tribal and religious differences; and armed confrontations must be addressed, he said. -- BERNAMA

MAD FR