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Mahathir-NAM

PM TELLS WEAKER COUNTRIES TO BAND TOGETHER FOR COMMON GOOD

By: Abdul Muin Abdul Majid

CAIRO, Jan 23 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Wednesday that the relevance of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) today should not be put into question as the movement will allow weaker countries to face the challenges of a world now dominated by one single power.

"It is more relevant today because a world that is dominated by one power alone is bound to disregard the weaker countries.

"So the weak countries must come together, they can do so in NAM, in order to strengthen themselves and oppose any oppression by the single power," he told reporters after delivering a lecture on the importance of Muslim unity at the Al Azhar University here.

He also said that it was wrong to think that the NAM was no longer relevant with the end of the Cold War or the non-existence of conflict between East and West.

Malaysia will host the NAM Summit next month and the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) Summit in October

Dr Mahathir said that Malaysia was also of the opinion that the best way to resolve problems besetting Muslim countries was for them to talk and discuss how best to strengthen the ummah.

"Which is why we consider the OIC and NAM meetings in Kuala Lumpur as very important.

"We have to talk to each other to find the best way to protect the Muslims who are today being attacked by people who are against us.

"We have to close ranks so that we can defend ourselves," said Dr Mahathir who ends his three-day working visit to Egypt Thursday.

Speaking to Malaysian journalists Wednesday evening, Dr Mahathir said that he had extended an invitation to President Hosni Mubarak to attend the two summits to be held in Kuala Lumpur.

He said as that Egypt had been one of the founding members of NAM, it was only appropriate for its leader to attend.

"He gave an undertaking that he will try, at least for a day. We hope he'll be able to attend," he said.

At the earlier media conference, Dr Mahathir also said that his presence in Egypt was to discuss ways and means of increasing trade volume between Malaysia and this north African country of 70 million people.

Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (Matrade) figures showed that Malaysia's total trade with Egypt in 2001 amounted to RM835.1 million with total exports at RM797.69 million and total imports at RM37.42 million.

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