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NAM-Timor Leste

TIMOR LESTE HAS FAITH IN KL LEADERSHIP OF NAM

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 23 (Bernama) -- Timor Leste, which will join the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) tomorrow along with Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, is confident that Malaysia can lead the movement even after Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad leaves office in October.

Its Foreign Minister, Dr Jose Ramos Horta, said today that Dr Mahathir's departure would not affect the movement as he would be able to continue leading it together with the new prime minister and the rest of the leadership in Malaysia.

"When he steps down, Dr Mahathir may not have to deal with the day-to-day management of the country, thus he would be able to devote more time to NAM," he told a media conference at the Timor Leste embassy here.

Dr Horta said that NAM, particularly during Malaysia's chairmanship, could be very successful and important for the developing world.

"Dr Mahathir has renowned credibility and is respected by everyone in the Third World. Although some of the rich countries may not be great fans of the prime minister, they still respect him.

"Even those who are sometimes annoyed by the way Dr Mahathir speaks and exposes them could not argue about Malaysia's success," Dr Horta said.

He said Malaysia, being a Muslim country, could well lead NAM in the dialogue of religions and civilisations.

Although the usefulness and relevance of NAM were questioned after the end of the Cold War, most of its members believed that NAM still had a role to play in mobilising a united force and pushing for a new agenda, he said.

"To band together as a team may not be difficult for the NAM leaders as they understand the rules of international relations," he said.

He said that many Third World countries had called for the eradication of poverty, increasing development assistance and opening up the markets of the rich which could be vital in fending off the swelling of extremists.

"The membership of the extremists increases because they don't have any other point of view to listen to as they are not educated, not informed and thus they become easily manipulated," he added.

-- BERNAMA

RT MAM JK