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Dr Mahathir's speech grabs front-page headlines

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir's call for Non-Aligned Movement members to take "the moral high ground" and making war illegal to solve the world's problems grabbed front-page headlines in every major Chinese daily on Tuesday.

"Welcome to Malaysia" was the headline adorning the front picture in the Sin Chew Daily which showed Dr Mahathir shaking hands with Singapore's Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong on his arrival at the Summit.

In an interview with the Sin Chew Daily, China's Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Guangya expressed confidence over the appointment of Malaysia as the new chairman of NAM, saying the 116-member movement needed capable leadership in order to exercise its influence.

"Dr Mahathir has been very consistent in offering constructive and progressive opinions on matters pertaining to economic, peace and regional issues.

"China has high hopes for NAM and wishes to see the movement playing a more significant role in international affairs under Malaysia's leadership."

One challenge awaiting Dr Mahathir, as the new NAM leader, will be the direction the body will take in years to come, and how the coalition of poor and under-developed countries will work together for their common good, a comment in Sin Chew Daily said on Wednesday.

It said poor countries may not be able to escape manipulation by more powerful nations.

Under the heading "The Press goes to war ahead of the Americans", Nanyang reported on Tuesday that a cameraman from a Japan broadcasting station was a picture of discontent when he deliberately knocked a French reporter's head and kicked others after being unable to get a strategic spot to carry out his work.

An Iraqi official who witnessed the incident moved in quickly to calm the situation but he could not stop policemen from taking the cameraman away for questioning.