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Vajpayee, Megawati among speakers at forum

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - Leaders of several Non-Aligned Movement countries are slotted to address the NAM Business Forum on Feb 23.

Chairman of the forum's organising committee, Datuk Dr Michael Yeoh, said the leaders who would participate in the session on "Remaking NAM, Enhancing Co-operation, Building Bridges" were South African President and outgoing NAM chairman Thabo Mbeki, Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri, Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra.

Yeoh, who is chief executive officer of the Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute (Asli), said Cuban President Fidel Castro, who will be chairing the next NAM summit, was also expected to address the forum.

He said the forum would be opened by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad. Dr Mahathir will deliver his keynote address on "Building a New World Order - Sustaining Peace, Sharing Global Prosperity".

"The addresses by the NAM leaders demonstrate their recognition of the private sector as their partners in development.

"Smart partnerships between Governments and businesses will strengthen economic development of NAM countries and uplift the living standards of the people."

Yeoh said the forum would also adopt a declaration proposing the institutionalisation of the business forum at future NAM summits to engage the business community in the NAM process.

He said the declaration would also make a strong call for world peace and international understanding.

"Without peace, economic development and progress cannot be achieved. Clearly the business community can only thrive in an environment of peace without uncertainties."

Yeoh said the forum participants were expected to endorse the Malaysians for Peace movement.

He said in line with NAM's objective of promoting world peace, the welcoming dinner for the forum would be themed "The Celebrating of Peace".

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi is the guest of honour and will deliver the address. He will also light the peace candles to signify the event.