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Let's all chip in to make NAM Summit a success

By Lee Lam Thye

KUALA Lumpur will roll out the red carpet to delegates of the 13th conference of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) when it plays host to the NAM Summit from Feb 20 to 25. The summit will be preceded by a meeting of senior officials on Feb 20 and 21, and of Foreign Ministers on Feb 22.

Malaysia can take pride at being chosen to host this summit at a critical time, the most serious issues being the impending war against Iraq, terrorism, and human rights violations in Palestine and many other countries.

The fact that Kuala Lumpur is hosting this event is testimony to the confidence developing countries have in our country.

The confidence can be attributed to the leadership of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad. Malaysia's chairmanship is also significant given that the challenges faced by developing countries are greater today.

These challenges include the creation of a stable, humane and equitable international environment conducive to economic growth, promoting greater democratisation in international relations, shaping the international agenda and maintaining national sovereignty in the face of globalisation.

NAM is a platform where member States can collectively address the challenges of the new millennium.

Comprising 114 countries, it is the largest grouping of developing countries outside the United Nations. And the NAM event is the largest international conference Malaysia has ever hosted.

NAM had its origins in Bandung, Indonesia, in 1955. There the nonaligned nations had declared their desire not to be involved in the Cold War, but rather to focus their energies on the struggle for independence, eradication of poverty and development.

To ensure that NAM is able to meet its various challenges, the summit will focus on the theme, "The continued revitalisation of NAM".

Members will focus their discussions not only on the way NAM works and how to meet the challenges, but also on strengthening the role of the chair as well as forging closer relations with groupings from the South such as the G77 and from the North such as the G8. I believe Malaysia will continue to emphasise the importance of unity and a sense of common purpose.

For Malaysia, the biggest challenge is to ensure the summit is incident-free at a time when there is so much fear of terrorism.

The police, I believe, are leaving no stone unturned to achieve that end.

Kuala Lumpur City Hall has also taken pains to beautify the city for the summit, and to facilitate traffic movement, schools in KL will be closed for two days. What is crucial is public co-operation.

People should plan their travel to and from work based on traffic information provided by the authority, using public transport where feasible.

My message to the public is to bear this short period of inconvenience for the sake of making the NAM Summit a success which will be a great honour for Malaysia and all Malaysians.

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