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NAM will be fortunate to have PM's leadership

By Azhari Karim

MALAYSIA is playing host to the 13th summit of the Non-Aligned Movement from Feb 20. As summits go, this one will be no different - the statements, the proceedings, the declarations and the sideshows.

What is of interest is the timing. The summit comes smack in the middle of a momentous decision by a superpower, the United States of America: to go or not to go to war with Iraq? NAM has to address this issue at some point in its deliberations on the state of the world today.

Not that it has the clout to do much, but it would be more in the interest of speaking out for the rest of the world. NAM certainly has the numbers and the voice to do so effectively.

This brings me to the second significant point of the Kuala Lumpur meet. How can NAM be made more effective? Go back to basics. NAM was founded on the need to steer a middle path between two superpowers. It did well for a time but it allowed atrophy to set in and the movement floundered.

To move NAM forward a new leadership must take charge. Malaysia and its Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, have come in at the right time. The middle-level power that he has made the country, Malaysia is today ready to assume a more responsible and active role, both regionally and internationally.

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