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NAM Summit prepares for the challenge of an uncertain world

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit to be held later this month, five years after the last one, will deal with new challenges and issues, brought about by the changes in the world today, said Pakistan's Deputy High Commissioner Shireen A. Moiz.

Clearly, since the last summit was held in Durban, South Africa in 1998, the challenges have assumed a new dimension that must be tackled by the grouping, as outlined by its principles of providing a forum for countries pursuing independent and non-aligned policies, she added.

"The world has changed so much in the last five years. And after Sept 11, there are whole new issues which are interlinked and need to be addressed.

"And as member countries are trying to promote the international laws and principles, it is going to be an important movement and summit."

She said the fact that the summit would be held in Malaysia made the impact on the outcome significant as Malaysia had always been vocal on issues such as globalisation and terrorism.

"We know the leadership of (Prime Minister Datuk Seri) Dr Mahathir Mohamad. His views on these issues are always respected. We are confident that as Malaysia is assuming the presidency of NAM for the next three years, there will be a new vigour and stance given to the movement."

Shireen said Pakistan wanted to play an active role in NAM in promoting peace.

Traditionally, Pakistan had been instrumental in evolving NAM's consensus position on issues such as peaceful settlement of disputes, nuclear conflicts and terrorism, she added.

"We also wish to see NAM play its role at all international fora, particularly in the United Nations. It is important that the movement safe-guards and preserves its principles on various international issues."

Shireen said the movement had played a historic role in the struggle against colonialism and racism.

"In our view all its principles are still valid despite the world's many political ideologies. The movement is still relevant to the new challenges faced by the world in the 21st century. The movement should continue to play its role in promoting peace, security and development."

On whether NAM's voice was still significant, Shireen said as the second largest grouping after the United Nations with 114 member countries, NAM represented the voice of the majority on a number of issues.

"This group has a large representation from the Organisation of Islamic Conference and all the regions in the world. NAM's voice can be very effective if there is a unanimous decision."

At NAM's 13th summit, to be held from Feb 20 to 25, NAM leaders are expected to discuss matters such as the settlement of conflicts in member states by peaceful means, improvement of cultural, educational and health conditions of citizens of NAM and enhancement of economic conditions.