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Peace stewardship a community effort

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IN his speech at the opening of the 13th Summit meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad called for the revitalisation of NAM, and for its 116 members to close ranks and act together to work for a new world order where democracy was not just confined to the internal governance of states but extended to the governance of the world.

The highlight of Dr Mahathir's speech was his call to make war illegal, to be enforced by multilateral forces under the control of the United Nations. "No single nation should be allowed to police the world, least of all to decide what action to take, and when," he said.

NAM, said the Prime Minister, must struggle to outlaw war and nuclear weapons, stop the research and development of more and more lethal weapons and also control the arms trade.

NAM members must take up the challenge of making the UN truly effective in serving the cause of peace. While the economic and developmental challenges are immense, the highest priority must be accorded to resisting war.

Wars kill and maim and leave scars forever.

It is most noteworthy that the 116 members of NAM have endorsed a "No War" declaration.

One of the main points of the Kuala Lumpur Declaration is that all members "uphold and adhere to the fundamental principles of the movement and the Charter of the UN in the preservation and promotion of world peace through dialogue and diplomacy among states and the avoidance and use of force to resolve conflicts".

NAM represents four-fifths of humanity and accounts for two-thirds of the UN membership. Collectively, they can speak with one voice to convey powerful messages to the UN on issues concerning world peace, economy and the changing scenario.

The biggest challenge for NAM now is to remain united and co-hesive, and have the organisational capacity to deal with the changes brought about by globalisation and liberalisation.

Malaysia deserves a pat on the back for successfully organising this gargantuan gathering. Syabas to all involved in its organisation, particularly the security personnel.

In retrospect, Malaysians have played a decisive role in impressing upon all NAM representatives the necessity to avoid war, which is not the answer to conflict.

The mammoth peace rally at the Bukit Jalil Stadium was historic and memorable. It was a meaningful gathering that not only articulated Malaysia's objection to a war with Iraq but also united Malaysians of all races and religions.

The rally was the grand finale to the Malaysians for Peace campaign. The 13th NAM Summit has ended but the call for peace has just begun. The Malaysians for Peace campaign must soldier on to become a community-based movement and a voice of the people for world peace.

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