

Be alert to problems, NAM told

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HAVANA: Malaysia has told fellow member countries of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) to beware of a host of new problems that are afflicting the world.

These included the return of apartheid policies and practices in the occupied Palestinian territories, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

"Armed conflicts and wars still rage in many parts of the world, including in NAM member countries. The threat of nuclear annihilation remains undiminished.

"The world is witnessing encroaching unilateralism and the steady erosion of international law and the Charter of the United Nations," he said in his opening address of the 14th NAM Summit here on Friday.

Abdullah said new forms of colonialism that were more pernicious and exploitative than before have surfaced and these require NAM to revamp its operational style to address them.

Malaysia, the outgoing chairman, reminded the 116 member nations that while NAM could be proud of some of its achievements, its work was far from done in view of such global changes.

The Prime Minister said the group must resist efforts to split and weaken it as a movement.

Besides the fight against injustice, inequity, political and economic exploitation and threats of weapons of mass destruction, Abdullah said NAM must also deal with serious issues such as the threat of international terrorism.

Abdullah said that besides the United Nations, NAM was the largest inter-governmental body in the world, adding that its size was an asset as it provided a leverage in efforts to exert influence in the international arena.

But, he warned, size could turn out to be a liability if it made NAM awkward and slow moving, unable to respond quickly to the rapid global changes.

For this reason, he said, there needs to be some serious thinking of its role, strategies and approaches for the future.

Abdullah later handed over the NAM chair to acting Cuban President Raul Castro, who stood in for his sick brother, Fidel.

Raul and other leaders in their speeches praised Malaysia for its sterling role in its three-year stewardship of NAM.