

CONFERENCE OF HEADS OF STATE OR GOVERNMENT OF THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT

REVITALISATION OF THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT

20-25 FEBRUARY 2003
KUALA LUMPUR



NAM and the contemporary world

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Nation
25.2.04

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The thirteenth summit meeting of 116 member countries of Non-Aligned Movement has started in Kuala Lumpur from Monday. The agenda for the summit, which include discussion on Iraq, North Korea and economic problems faced by the developing countries, has been prepared by a series of meetings of the experts and Foreign Ministers Conference held earlier in the Malaysian capital.

NAM was born at the height of Cold War era, when the US told the newly independent states of the Third World: "either you be with us or against us." A group of countries refused to accept this advice. Led by courageous leaders, they decided to challenge the US assertion; and founded a movement, which played historic role in safeguarding the economic and political independence of the developing countries.

The contemporary world presents a political scene very much similar to the one existing in early 1960s. Once again the nations of the world are being coerced into falling in line with a superpower bent upon imposing a world order of its choice. The end of Cold War has not produced a secure and safe world. On the other hand, the world today is faced with a much more dangerous and complex situation.

In the days of the Cold War, the bi-polar nature of the international system had an inherent mechanism of balancing the adventurous acts of one superpower by the deterrence power of the other. But with the disintegration of the former Soviet Union and the fall of communism, there is no power, which can act as a counter-balancing force to the hegemonic designs of the sole superpower.

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note that the demonstration of public anger over the US plans for war against Iraq was far stronger in the western countries like UK, France, Italy, Spain and even in the United States than in the developing countries, including the Muslim countries. It clearly means that the forces opposed to war are equally stronger in the developed world.

This can be a strong base for building solidarity between the peoples of the developed and developing worlds for defending peace and justice on the globe. The worldwide protest demonstrations condemning the US plan for attacking Iraq reinforces the belief that the people of the whole world can be united into a movement for upholding the just cause.

The millions of people in the developed world came out on the roads to express their resentment over the attitude of some of the governments that wished to reshape the world map. It is now up to the people of the developing countries to read the message correctly and keep the momentum of struggle against the forces of aggression, violence and terrorism. The NAM summit at Kuala Lumpur has a special responsibility to take unanimous decisions on the issues that confront the world today.

Thirdly, in case of US attack on Iraq, it is the people of the developing countries that would suffer the most. The US-UK attack on Iraq would immediately set ablaze the whole of Middle East. It is not only Europe whose economy and defense is linked with the Middle East, the stability and security in North and East Africa, West and South Asia and, beyond the Indian Ocean, would severely be affected.

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ing force to the hegemonic designs of the sole superpower.

During the last about one decade, there is an increasing resort to unilateralism, coercive diplomacy and arms twisting tactics by the remaining superpower in pursuit of its foreign policy goals. In such situation, the NAM has critical role to play; because it embodies the feelings and aspirations of more than two third of the mankind.

There are three other compelling reasons why NAM must rise to the occasion and; like in the past show the arrogant powers of the world a path of reason and moderation in dealing with each other. Firstly, the United Nations whose primary duty was to maintain international peace and security is being marginalized and bypassed by the United States to achieve its strategic goals.

For the last about five decades and more, the world has heavily relied on collective security system of the United Nations for checking the forces of aggression from threatening or breaching international peace, despite some inherent weaknesses of the world body. But the way the United States is threatening to attack Iraq, despite the protests by the millions across the world, clearly shows that the sole superpower has scant respect for the UN, which it itself helped establish after the Second World war.

It is not for the first time that the United States demonstrated its proclivity to act against the will of the majority of the humanity embodied in the United Nations. In 1970, when the UN General Assembly censured Israel and racist South Africa for continuously violating numerous UN resolutions, the United States called those decisions as the "tyranny of the majority and threatened to pull out of the UN system."

To show its displeasure, the United States stopped its contribution to the United Nations, bringing the world body under severe financial crisis. Today again, the United States is threatening to ignore the United Nations on Iraq. Since NAM is the largest international organization outside the United Nations, it must take note of US attitude towards the collective will of the peoples of the world as reflected in the deliberations of the United Nations and worldwide reaction to American position on Iraq.

Secondly, the recently held large scale protests in the United States and Europe opposing US attack on Iraq has created an unprecedented opportunity for NAM to join hands with the people in the developed world in foiling the attempts to carve out new spheres of influence. It is interesting to

South Asia and, beyond the Indian Ocean, would severely be affected.

The worst affected would be the countries of South and Southeast Asia because of geographical proximity and heavy dependence on imported oil. Pakistan is already bearing the brunt of war against terror unleashed by the American bombing on Afghanistan. Due to global recession, the economies of the developing countries are already under heavy strains.

The opening of hostilities in the Middle East with their impact on world trade would frustrate the efforts of the developing countries to improve their economies. It is, therefore, in the interest of the member countries of NAM to strongly oppose an attack on Iraq. The NAM should speak with a unanimous voice on this issue and evolve a consensus on how to resolve the crisis through peaceful means.

The summit should form a committee to mediate between the US and Iraq and bring the two sides to a peaceful settlement. Similar stand should be taken on the issue of North Korea. The situation created by the tension between the US and North Korea can lead to conflict in the Far East, which would further undermine global peace and security.

The leaders of the Non-aligned countries are holding their summit meeting in Kuala Lumpur at a time when a number of recent developments have enhanced its relevance in world affairs. The foremost among them, of course, is the looming danger of war in the Middle East with large concentration of forces by the US and UK in the Persian Gulf and the adjacent waters.

The US threat to take military action against Iraq with or without the approval of the United Nations represents a mindset with scant regard to world public opinion, including the opinion of millions of demonstrators in the developed world. It is a serious challenge before the participants of the summit meeting, which can only be met if the member countries show a strong resolve to oppose unilateralism in world politics and recourse to coercive diplomacy.

The Cold War ended more than a decade ago; but the world is still far from having a stable political order. Rather, there is more uncertainty and confusion and the principle of might is right seems to be the order of the day. In such circumstances, the NAM has a special role to play by stressing the moral basis of diplomacy.

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