

GMA off to Egypt

President Arroyo is leaving this afternoon for Egypt to attend the two-day 15th Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Leaders Summit.

In a statement, Malacañang said the trip was "a mission of peace and a more prosperous world" as Mrs. Arroyo is expected to hold bilateral talks with some heads of state on the sidelines of the summit.

Mrs. Arroyo is NAM vice president for Asia, the Palace

said.

Foreign affairs officials, who asked not to be named, said President Arroyo is expected to meet with Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Tajik President Emomali Rahmon on the sidelines of the summit.

The summit, which will have the theme "International Solidarity for Peace and Development," will be held at the

Turn to Page 5

GMA off

From Page 1

Sharm El-Sheikh, a famous tourism destination also known as "The City of Peace" due to the numerous international peace conferences that have been held in the area, the Palace statement said.

Mrs. Arroyo was earlier invited by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to speak on behalf of the Asian leaders during the opening tomorrow.

"She has been the leading voice of developing countries on the war against terrorism and promoting interfaith dialogue to achieve durable peace and nuclear non-proliferation," the statement said.

Mrs. Arroyo has also been pushing for the promotion of

the rights of migrant workers, urgent efforts to address piracy in the high seas, and the revitalization of international finance institutions to help developing countries effectively address the current global economic crisis and similar crises that may arise in the future, the statement said.

During the trip, the President will also call for the active participation of all NAM members in the Special NAM Ministerial Meeting on Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace and Development that will be held in Manila on Dec. 1 to 3.

The NAM summit is also said to be crucial for Bang-

ladesh as it would enable the head of the new government to interact with leaders of different countries.

Aside from Mrs. Arroyo, the Tajik President is also expected to hold a number of meetings with other heads of delegations on the sidelines of the summit.

NAM is an international organization of states which consider themselves not formally aligned with or against any major power bloc.

The movement, largely the brainchild of former president of Egypt Gamal Abdul Nasser, Indian

Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Yugoslav President Josip Broz Tito, was founded in April 1955 and now has 119 members.

The purpose of the organization as stated in the Havana Declaration of 1979 is to "ensure the national independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of non-

aligned countries" in their "struggle against imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism and all forms of foreign aggression, occupation, domination, interference or hegemony as well as against great power and bloc politics."

They represent nearly two-thirds of the United Nations' members and comprise 55

percent of the world population, particularly countries considered to be developing or part of the Third. -
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