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G-15 TO STUDY CRITERIA FOR ADMITTING NEW MEMBERS

Summit - Mahathir

from Donald Baggist

CARACAS, Nov 30 (Bernama) -- Leaders of the Group of 15 developing countries have agreed to look into the possibility of expanding the body to provide for a more balanced representation in membership.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the criteria for admitting new members would be studied by the G-15 foreign ministers and their recommendations would most likely be considered at the next summit to be held in Dakar, Senegal.

He told Malaysian reporters covering the second summit, which ended here yesterday, that Asia and the Middle East have been mentioned as areas from which the new members could be admitted.

The G-15 leaders felt that the group could be expanded because the present membership comprised only three countries from Asia -- India, Indonesia and Malaysia -- while Latin America and the Caribbean had six and Africa five.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said that until the criteria had been decided and agreed to by G-15 leaders and the countries to be invited to join, he could not name the countries.

He described the summit here, attended by 11 of the 15 heads of state of government, as a highly successful one which saw the G-15 making substantial progress.

He said: +This is reflected in the seriousness shown by the heads who made it a point to attend. Only those who had cogent reasons were absent+. -- more

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Heads of state or government from 11 countries -- Algeria, Argentina, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Senegal, Venezuela, Yugoslavia and Zimbabwe attended. Those absent were from Brazil, Egypt, Jamaica and Nigeria.

He added that Malaysia was happy with the results and it would definitely be attending the third summit in Dakar. It had also been agreed that India would host the fourth summit and Argentina the fifth.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir was happy with the progress of projects proposed at the inaugural summit in Kuala Lumpur in June last year, particularly those entrusted to Malaysia to implement.

These were the Bilateral Payments Arrangements, a mechanism to guarantee payments for trade transactions, which Malaysia has already signed with 11 developing countries, the Multilateral Payments Arrangements and the establishment of the South Investment, Trade and Technology Data Exchange Centre (SITTODEC) to be set up in Kuala Lumpur.

The G-15 leaders acknowledged that the payments arrangements had progressed well and there was already an increase in trade between the countries of the South.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said +it is obvious the group has become a cogent and solid group which will contribute towards solving the problems of the South and making their voice and views heard in international fora, including the United Nations.+

He also said that G-15 foreign ministers had been given the task of preparing a paper on the views of member countries with regard to the New World Order, to be completed in January. -- more

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The views of the South with regard to the New World Order was considered important as +we do not want the New World Order to be formed by the North for their own interests+ he added.

The G-15 leaders stressed that any form of New World Order must first have the consent of the South countries.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the summit also gave attention to environment issues and felt that the views of developing countries be taken into consideration at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development or the +Earth Summit+ to be held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992.

Those views would be based on a study done by the South Commission which prepared a paper on it.

He reiterated that Malaysia had yet to decide whether or not to attend +Earth Summit+ and it would wait for the outcome of the Preparatory Committee meeting in Geneva and the ministerial meeting of developing countries in Kuala Lumpur.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir was also happy with the convening of the first Businessmen's Meeting in conjunction with the G-15 summit as it proved very useful and gave private sector representatives from member countries the opportunity to establish contacts and obtain information towards promoting trade and investment. -- Bernama

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