

CNS2224

R GE 30-11 08197 EA508.

aae tbe

Mahathir-G15 (With pix)

FUTURE OF G15 BRIGHT, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

bm

⁹²
~~KUALA~~ LUMPUR, Nov 30 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir ~~Mohamad~~ said today the Group of 15 (G-15) had a bright future considering the interest, shown by many South countries to become members.

Membership of the grouping need not be confined to 15 although it would continued to be known as the G-15.

+It will not be unusual for G-15 to have more than 15 members, not unlike the G-77 which has more than 100 members and the G-7, which is expected to increase its membership in the future, + he told reporters at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Subang on his return from Namibia, Tunisia and Dakar; Senegal, where he attended the third G-15 summit.

Dr Mahathir said G-15 agreed to admit Chile as its newest member during the Dakar summit.

On the absence of five heads of government at the summit, he said this was normal as the selection of member countries during the 'early stages of its formation was done on a random basis, -- more

▼30/11/10-03MST

CNS2239

R GE 30-11 00185 EA51.0

aae tbe

Mahathir-G15 2 Kuala Lumpur

As no assessment was done on the countries prior to formation of G-15, there were bound to be some member countries which had a stronger interest in the group compared with others, he added.

He said, however, Argentina, which was not represented by its President Carlos Menem at the Dakar summit, had agreed to host the fifth summit in 1994. The fourth summit is to be hosted by India next year.

He also said Malaysia's suggestion to set up a Centre of Excellence in the South and to have seminars on economic planning and privatisation received encouraging support from G-15 member countries.

He was confident that South-South trade ties would improve with the setting up of the South' Investment, Trade and Technology Data Exchange Centre (Sittdec) by Malaysia and the bilateral payments arrangement between central banks of G-15 countries.

Looking at his trip overall, the Prime Minister said Malaysia's chances to improve trade with the three countries he visited were good +if we work hard+. -- more

▼30/11/10-43MST

CNS2257

R GE 30-11 00171 EA511

aae tbe

Mahathir-G153 Kuala Lumpur

The three countries had also expressed a strong interest to have closer trade ties with Malaysia, particularly Tunisia which was interested in the privatisation concept.

Commenting on the amendments to the Sabah State Constitution passed by the State Legislative Assembly last week, Dr Mahathir said in terms of spirit of democracy the move was certainly not democratic.

But whether democratic or not, it is up to the people to think about it. If the Federal government were to act in the same way, it would be reported around the world by the international Press that we were not democratic, he said.

It was his opinion that the amendments were made only to prevent Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) state assemblymen from switching parties and not to curb bad behavior among assemblymen as claimed.

He said a study would have to be conducted to determine whether the Sabah amendments contradicted the Federal constitution. -- more

▼30/11/11-00MST

R GE 30-11 00184 EA512

aae tbe

Mahathir-G154 Kuala Lumpur

On the call by Sabah Chief Minister and PBS President. Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan that the proposed debate on the 20-point Federation agreement be changed to a forum, Dr. Mahathir said this was an attempt by PBS to cover up its own weaknesses.

If a forum were held instead of a debate, the people would not know the truth, he said.

To Deputy Prime Minister Ghafar Baba's recent statement that he would continue to support him, the Prime Minister said he had never doubted his deputy's support and allegations to the contrary were, only the work of elements out to split Umno unity for their own gains.

Foreign Ministry Secretary-General Tan Sri Ahmad Kamil Jaafar, who was also present, said it would be most appropriate for Malaysia to host the proposed G-15 seminar on economy and privatisation.

He said the date and venue of the seminar had yet to be decided and it would be open to all South countries and not only G-15 members. -- more

▼30/11/11-03MST

R GE 30-11 00065 EA513

aae tbe

Mahathir-G155 Kuala Lumpur

Present at the airport to welcome home the Prime Minister were his wife Datuk Seri Datin Paduka Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Ghafar, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Abang Abu Bakar Mustapha, Agriculture Minister Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid and Perak Menteri Besar Tan Sri Ramli Ngah Talib. -- Bernama

▼30/11/11-03MST