

Revitalise G-15 to make it more

NEW DELHI, Wed. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he is confident the G-15 can be revitalised to make it more meaningful to members and at the same time beneficial to all developing countries.

Dr Mahathir said the summit next year would audit activities of the four-year-old G-15 to convince members of the importance and relevance of the grouping.

He and the other G-15 leaders — Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao and Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe — were disappointed that some of the leaders lacked commitment to the cause of South-South co-operation.

"During our consultations we agreed that we have to work to ensure that the next summit will be held," he said at a Press Conference at the end of his

four-day bilateral visit, reclassified as such after the G-15 Summit was postponed.

Dr Mahathir said he hoped there would be a quorum — 10 heads of government — so that the meeting would be able to decide on the future of the grouping.

"We cannot do anything until we meet," he said.

To a question, he said he was unaware that some countries had come under some pressure not to attend the Dec 13-15 Fourth Summit in the Indian capital.

The other members of the G-15 are Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, Egypt, Indonesia, Jamaica, Mexico, Nigeria, Peru, Senegal, Venezuela, Zimbabwe and Chile.

On the agreement achieved between the world's biggest traders — the United States and the

European Community — in the seven-year Uruguay Round of the GATT talks, paving the way for the largest-ever trade deal, the Prime Minister said he was happy.

"The signing of the agreement will lead to an orderly world trade which is what is needed for growth — otherwise there will be anarchy as people will put up more protective barriers which is not good for any of us," he said.

Dr Mahathir said even though only the voices of the big countries counted in the negotiations, their decisions were unlikely to be unfavourable to the smaller nations.

On the other hand, he said with an orderly world trade regime, small countries would no longer face barriers in trading internationally.

"There will no longer be unilateral action of the protectionist kind," he added.

On the Non-Aligned Movement, he said Malaysia and India were active members and both felt that there should be more than just one force in this world.

"If we have a unipolar world, maybe it will not be so good for smaller countries," he said.

An Indian journalist asked what provocations had led to the weapons buying spree by the Southeast Asian countries.

The Prime Minister said there was no provocation. What the countries, which became independent almost at the same time, were doing was merely to buy new weapons as what they had were already out of date.

"In the case of Malaysia, it is just that we are a little richer now and therefore we

meaningful, says PM

are buying a little more and more sophisticated weapons," he said.

To another question by an Indian journalist about the Moro problem in southern Philippines and what Malaysia thought of it, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia, as far as possible, did not interfere in the internal affairs of another country.

He said the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) had just held talks in Jakarta with representatives of Philippines President Fidel Ramos.

"According to MNLF leader Nur Misuari, who came to see me after the meeting, he was quite happy with the result of the talks."

Later, responding to questions from reporters on arrival at Subang Airport this evening, Dr Mahathir said he believed that the majority of the G-15 members

were still committed to the group although they were unable to attend the proposed summit in India, forcing its postponement.

He said most of the G-15 leaders had to attend to more pressing matters in their respective countries which had prevented them from attending the summit.

Asked whether there was any truth in a British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) report that some of the leaders had been influenced by the United States to stay away from the summit, Dr Mahathir said he did not receive any such information and therefore would not want to make any assumption.

He said for instance, Argentina, which is supposed to hold the meeting after India, had expressed willingness to hold the summit and Zimbabwe had asked to

organise the meeting after Argentina.

However, he said India would still hold next year's summit meeting either in late March or early April.

He said members would also decide whether the summit in Argentina should also be held next year, twice in a year because of the postponement of the summit in India, or in 1995.

On his visit to India, Dr Mahathir said it had given the opportunity for him to hold bilateral discussions with Rao and President Mugabe. He said the Malaysian delegation also held discussions with Indian government and private sector representatives.

He said six Memorandums of Understanding were signed between the governments and the private sector of the two countries.