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G15-Mahathir

MAHATHIR DISAPPOINTED WITH POOR TURNOUT OF LEADERS AT G-15 SUMMIT

From Ali Mamat

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NEW DELHI, March 29 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today expressed disappointment with the poor turnout of leaders at the ongoing summit here of the Group of 15 (G-15) developing countries, attended by only six of the heads of government.

The leaders of at least 10 nations had pledged to attend the meeting, he told Malaysian journalists covering the summit.

Those attending the three-day meeting are Dr Mahathir, President Subarto of Indonesia, President Abdou Diouf of Senegal, President Sani Abacha of Nigeria, President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe and Prime Minister Narasimha Rao of host India.

Absent are the heads of government of Algeria, Brazil, Chile, Egypt, Jamaica, Mexico, Peru and Venezuela. The incoming G-15 chairman, President Carlos Menem of Argentina, is scheduled to be present on the last day of the meeting.

The absent leaders had cited, among other things, pressing domestic problems as their reason for staying away. -- more

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Nevertheless, Dr Mahathir said, the leaders who attended were really serious about wanting to undertake all the programmes of the grouping.

He also said that the meeting came up with a formula to get around the insufficient quorum of attendance by requiring only eight leaders to make up the quorum instead of the previous 10.

Of the eight, at least five must be heads of government while the other three must be acting, deputy or vice heads of government, he added.

Dr Mahathir said the decision would be made known to all member nations.

Asked whether the absence of many of the heads of government at the ongoing summit reflected their level of commitment to the G-15, he said the majority of the leaders remained committed to the grouping. -- more

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"From the letters and the representatives, many of them foreign ministers, sent by the leaders, I gather that there is commitment.

"Although some countries did not send any representative, six nations sent top-level delegations. It is clear, therefore, that the majority remain committed," he said.

Dr Mahathir acknowledged that it was not easy to get all 15 heads of government to together at the same time.

On a suggestion for the summit to be held biennially, he said the majority of the leaders present at the ongoing meeting seemed to want to retain the present annual session. -- Bernama

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