

# G-15 to seek ways of improving Foreign Trips info flow

From   
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NEW DELHI, Wed. — Member countries of the Group of 15 agreed to seek effective ways to have better exchanges on the use of information and telecommunications services, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said members also agreed to find other ways to have a more effective exchange of satellite broadcasting such as the use of new satellites which may be launched in the near future.

Speaking to Malaysian newsmen at the end of the G-15 summit, Dr Mahathir said the agencies or departments involved in these operations had been directed to undertake follow-up discussions as soon as possible, with a view of immediate implementation.

He said this was agreed when heads of government held their traditional retreat get-together at the Indian Prime Minister's official residence here.

"The retreat agreed on three major matters. Firstly, to take a common stand against the attempts by the developed countries to force social clauses on us; secondly, to intensify co-operation in the areas of information and telecommunications; and thirdly, to look at freer exchanges of information and know-how on small and medium-scale industries," said Dr Mahathir.

He said the need for better information flow stemmed partly from the fact that international news flow was largely in the hands of agencies owned and controlled by people or interests in the developed countries.

He said new agencies from developing countries must work closer together. "Perhaps they should look at new initiatives towards a more effective co-operation," he said, adding that new linkages must be established or sought.

Earlier, at the joint Press conference immediately after the meeting was officially closed by Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, Dr Mahathir said it was imperative for G-15 countries to reach a common position at next month's post-General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) meeting in Marrakesh, Morocco, to resist new protectionist measures being moved by industrialised nations.

Developing countries must be united in their stand against attempts by developed nations to impose a minimum wage worldwide, he said, adding that

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this would be the most dangerous threat to developing countries.

He named the United States' Super 301 and numerical quotas as two other threats hanging over the economies of developing countries.

The Super 301 is a trade instrument given a new lease of life by Washington recently. It is a provision in the US trade law that allows the US President to authorise unilateral trade sanctions.

The President can impose punitive sanctions in retaliation against unfair trading practices.

Dr Mahathir was responding to a question on how he thought the G-15 Trade and Foreign Ministers, who have been directed by the summit here to meet ahead of next month's Marrakesh meeting on the formal ratification of GATT, should approach the developing countries' concerns of new protectionist measures.

"Although the Uruguay Round (of GATT) has been concluded, there is still a tendency for industrialised countries to take unilateral action.

"Developing countries must be careful. If we are not together, we may well go down one by one and become poorer than we were. If we are going to take proper resistance against such moves, then we must be aware of these threats.

"They know that the lower cost of labour in developing countries is due to the lower cost of living. Lower labour cost is not exploitation.

"They say they want the minimum wage throughout the world to be the same out of sympathy for our workers. But the result of the higher cost is that we may to close down our companies and we may not be able to attract investors such as the multinational corporations because the high wages have eliminated whatever comparative advantages we may have."

The global minimum wage policy is likely to be one of the contentious issues to be debated in Marrakesh.

India is to co-ordinate a planned meeting of G-15 Ministers attending the Morocco conference.

Dr Mahathir said the Ministers must articulate their arguments forcefully, adding that they must "protect and advance" the cause of the hard-pressed developing economies.

The summit leaders, in their joint communique issued at the end of the meeting, declared that they were "concerned at moves to inscribe new and additional issues like labour standards for the WTO".

The seven-page communique said: "It is necessary that some form of monitoring mechanism be established to ensure that, in the implementation of the Uruguay Rounds (of GATT), the interests of developing countries are adequately protected.

"We strongly urge trading partners to refrain from actions which would have the effect of unravelling the carefully negotiated balance of rights, obligations and interests of all parties ... thus jeopardising the global trading system."

It urged that the United Nations be restructured, taking into account the significant changes that had taken place in the post-war system.

The leaders also welcomed Argentina's offer to host the next summit in Buenos Aires next year as well as Zimbabwe's offer to host the sixth summit in 1996 in Harare.