

PM: G-15 increasing membership to bring in committed people

THE Group of 15 (G-15) is increasing its membership in order to bring in more people who are committed to improving the co-operation among members to help other developing and under-developed countries, the Prime Minister said yesterday.

He said he was certain that with more committed members, more obstacles between nations of the South would be removed, to increase trade, social and cultural contacts.

"The summits have been important as, at least, contacts are made which have proven to be very useful," he said after a ceremony to take delivery of 20 horses for the Malaysian Police Force at Estancia La Larga Lobos, about 140km from here. He is here to attend the fifth summit of the G-15.

Dr Mahathir said since the South-South policy began and the G-15 was formed, trade among the South-South countries had increased about 300 per cent and was going up.

He was sure that at the two-day summit, which began yesterday, more obsta-

cles would be swept away.

The other members are Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Mexico, Nigeria, Peru, Senegal, Venezuela, Zimbabwe and Chile.

Besides bringing in more members, another reason for increasing the members is because it is not an exclusive club.

Dr Mahathir said attendance was much better this time compared with that last year. He hoped that at the Zimbabwe summit next year there would be a better turn out.

Meanwhile, *Bernama* reports Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as saying that Malaysia will propose the setting up of a committee to review tariff structures of member countries of the G-15 in efforts to encourage intra-trade.

He said the committee could decide ways to ensure that member countries did not impose unreasonable tariffs or present restrictions to obstruct imports.

"If the G-15 wants to encourage intra-trade there should not be any discrimi-

nation on imports from the G-15 member countries," he told Malaysian reporters.

Dr Mahathir will be presenting a working paper on privatisation to be discussed by the heads of governments at the two-day summit.

"Since Malaysia has wide experience in privatisation, the Prime Minister considers that this will be a good time for an exchange of ideas on the privatisation programme," Abdullah said.

Earlier, Abdullah briefed Dr Mahathir on the preparations and agenda of the summit to be held at Alvear Palace Hotel. Argentinian President Carlos Menem is scheduled to open the summit.

The leaders are expected to go into the details of the communique which had been given the theme "Economic Co-operation Until and After the Year 2000".

The main items in the communique include the question of globalisation and regional-level economic co-operation, said Abdullah.