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Mahathir-G15

HARARE SUMMIT INJECTS NEW LIFE TO G-15, SAYS PM

By: Kuah Guan Oo

HARARE, Nov 5 (Bernama) -- The sixth summit of the group of 15 developing countries (G-15) has injected a new life into the six-year old organisation, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said here today.

He said this was because the member countries had in the last three days of meeting, shown their commitment to the grouping.

"They have renewed their commitment, and Jamaica has expressed its interest to play host to the summit (after Kuala Lumpur in 1997)," he said at a press conference for Malaysian newsmen just before the close of the summit.

The prime minister, accompanied by Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamad Ali and Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi left for French Guinea after the summit here, for his first visit to the central-west African nation.

"It has been a very good meeting.. we spoke very frankly on various issues during the Retreat, " he said.

Dr Mahathir, together with the other leaders except Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak spent a night at the Elephant Hill resort in Vistoria Falls, some 800km west of here, for their Retreat. They returned to Hahare this morning to close their summit.

Dr Mahathir also said Kenya had been accepted as a member of G-15 and he has been entrusted by the other leaders to bring Kenya to the next summit in Kuala Lumpur.

He said that what they wanted are committed or "quality" members while the total membership should not be too big or too small.

He said the leaders had, during their retreat, focussed their discussions on the World Trade Organisation (WTO) ministerial meeting in Singapore next month, as " we are very concerned over any attempts to smuggle other issues like corruption, labour rights, environment" into the organisation.

"We are very firm in rejecting any of this attempt," he added. Asked how the G-15 or other developing countries could stop the unilateral laws with extra-territorial effect by a country, he pointed out that the unilateral action is opposed by some developed countries.

"So, if we stay united against this, the superpowers cannot do anything. That is why we made it a point to stress on this," he said.

He also said that they would raise this point at the WTO meeting in Singapore. In this connection, the G-15 economic ministers would meet with their opposites from the Southern African Development and Economic Cooperation to coordinate their positions prior to the WTO ministerial meeting in Singapore. -- BERNAMA

KGO AAM