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G15-Abdullah
G15 CONSIDERING ESTABLISHING CONTACT WITH G7

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 1 (Bernama) -- The G15, in an effort to enhance North-South dialogue, may consider meetings with the Group of Seven developed countries (G7) if current issues warrant such a contact.

Malaysian Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today a G15-G7 meeting would depend on G15's own position on particular issues and the significance of the issues.

"There hasn't been such arrangements before although at the level of the chair of G15 (Malaysia) there has been some contact with the members of the G7.

"But we hope that in the future there will be such an opportunity and even a possibility of group to group contact," he told reporters at the lunch break after chairing the 15th meeting of the G15 Foreign Ministers here.

The G7 comprises the United States, Germany, France, Britain, Japan, Canada and Italy.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had earlier this year proposed a dialogue between the G15 and G7 to enhance economic cooperation.

On trade and economic relations within G15, Abdullah said there had been suggestions that economic agreements among members, such as the one on investments and double taxation, be made legally binding.

He said there was also a need to expand the current G15 membership, especially to include some West Asian countries as that region was currently not represented.

Several West Asian countries have showing interest in joining the G15 but the names would not be announced as it had not been finalised, he said.

Malaysia, Indonesia and India are currently the only Asian members of the grouping. The other members are Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Egypt, Jamaica, Mexico, Nigeria, Peru, Senegal, Venezuela and Zimbabwe.

Kenya will be admitted as the 16th member during the summit which will begin on Monday.

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On the frequency of the G15 foreign ministers meeting, Abdullah said it would continue to be held annually as no consensus had been achieved.

The frequency of the G15 Summit, however, will be left to the decision of the leaders, he said.-- BERNAMA

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