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Mahathir-Japan

MALAYSIA ASKS JAPAN TO PROMOTE FORUMS BETWEEN G-15, G-7

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 8 (Bernama) -- Malaysia has asked Japan to facilitate regular forums between the G-15 developing nations and G-7 industrialised countries on issues that affect the Third World.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said in talks here today with visiting Japanese premier Ryutaro Hashimoto that the G-7 countries often made decisions based on their respective interest without considering the views of developing countries.

Dr Mahathir cited the example of efforts by the G-7 countries to strengthen the yen which raised the debt level of developing nations, according to Foreign Ministry Secretary-General Datuk Abdul Kadir Mohamed who briefed the media after the bilateral meeting at the Prime Minister's office.

Abdul Kadir said Dr Mahathir pointed out that the appreciation of the yen caused borrowings in the Japanese currency to rise thus affecting the balance of payment of countries such as Malaysia.

Japan is a member of the G-7 which groups the world's richest countries such as the United States and Britain.

Hashimoto arrived today with a 72-member delegation for a two-day visit which forms the second leg of his five-nation tour of Southeast Asian countries.

Malaysia, the current chairman of G-15, will host the group's meeting at the end of this year.

Abdul Kadir said the suggestion of regular forums between G-15 and G-7 was raised by Dr Mahathir at the request of other G-15 members.

"However, the mechanism of how such forums between the two groupings could be formulated was not discussed today. It may be discussed at some other time.

"Today, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir was merely introducing an idea to the Japanese Prime Minister to assist G-15 to establish forums with G-7," he said.

Abdul Kadir believed Japan would convey Malaysia's request to other members of the G-7.

On the East Asian Economic Caucus (EAEC) mooted by Malaysia and which Japan is reluctant to join because of strong opposition by the United States, Abdul Kadir said the issue was not discussed at the meeting.

But Dr Mahathir stressed to his Japanese counterpart the need for the East Asian countries to get together and discuss and exchange views, he said.

Abdul Kadir also said that Malaysia would continue with the Look East Policy although at times it would look towards the West but only in certain areas.

"The Look East Policy is very much alive and the Prime Minister hopes Japan will give more places to Malaysian students," he said.

Abdul Kadir also said that the Japanese prime minister supported the concept of Asean 10 although some Japanese people had shown concern for human rights in Myanmar.

"Both leaders talked about Myanmar joining Asean. The prime minister explained the rationale of Asean 10 and the Japanese Prime Minister responded positively," he added.

On Japan's proposal for regular Japan-Asean summits, Abdul Kadir said that although the Japanese leader raised the matter and emphasised the need

for both the Asean and Japanese leaders to meet, Dr Mahathir did not give a unilateral response.

"We don't want to over-emphasise the proposal ... when it involves Asean countries, we do not give a unilateral response to such important matters," he said.

Abdul Kadir also said that the two leaders exchanged views on regional security, particularly concerning China.

He said Dr Mahathir responded by saying that he believed the policy of friendship was better than containment where China was concerned and that there was nothing to stop China from being prosperous and powerful. --

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