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Need for G-7, G-15 dialogue mechanism, Dr M tells Hashimoto

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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today emphasised the need to establish a dialogue mechanism between G-7 and G-15 to ensure the interests of developing countries are taken into account in decisions made by industrialised nations.

Dr Mahathir, during his bilateral discussions with visiting Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto, urged Japan to convey to other G-7 members the need for the mechanism so that the interests of developing nations were safeguarded.

Foreign Ministry secretary-general Datuk Abdul Kadir Mohamad, who briefed reporters after the meeting which was followed by discussions between the two delegations, said Dr Mahathir pointed out that G-7 countries often made decisions based on their respective interests without considering the views of developing countries.

The G-7 groups the United States, Japan, Canada, Britain, France, Germany and Italy - while the G-15 comprises Malaysia, Indonesia, India, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Jamaica, Peru, Venezuela, Algeria, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Mexico, Senegal and Egypt.

Abdul Kadir said Dr Mahathir cited the example of efforts by the G-7 countries to strengthen the yen which raised the debt level of developing nations, including that of Malaysia's yen loans, by 2 1/2 times at one period of time.

"Dr Mahathir said the appreciation of the yen had caused borrowings in the Japanese currency to rise, thus affecting the balance of payment of many countries, including Malaysia," he said, adding that he was confident Hashimoto would convey Malaysia's request to other G-7 members.

On Japan's proposal to hold regular meetings between Japan and the Asean heads of government, Abdul Kadir said a decision would be made after Malaysia had consulted other Asean members.

"We do not want to give a unilateral reply since the proposal involves all Asean countries," he said.

Abdul Kadir said the two leaders exchanged views on regional security and added that Hashimoto wanted Dr Mahathir's views on China.

"Dr Mahathir said he believed the policy of friendship was better than containment especially since there was nothing to stop China from being prosperous and powerful".

He said the issue of Myanmar was also raised and Dr Mahathir had explained the Asean founding fathers' concept of having all 10 Southeast Asian nations under the Asean umbrella.

Abdul Kadir also said Hashimoto supported the concept of Asean 10 but added that some quarters in Japan had voiced concern over the relations between the Myanmar State Law and Order Restoration Council and Aung San Suu Kyi and of possible human rights violations there.

He said that although the East Asia Economic Caucus was not discussed specifically, both leaders agreed there was a need for East Asian countries to exchange views on issues that affected them.

"Dr Mahathir also told Hashimoto that he appreciated the Japanese leader's visit especially when the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement has seized the official residence of Japanese ambassador to Peru."

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