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DR M: NEW APEC MEMBERS WOULDN'T BE A PROBLEM TO GROUPING

By: Arshi Mohd Daud

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 18 (Bernama) -- The expansion of Apec's membership to include Russia, Peru and Vietnam will not pose a problem to the regional economic grouping, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today.

"I do not think they are going to be a problem. I think their experience will be very useful for Apec," he told a press conference at the end of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) Forum summit here.

Dr Mahathir said the 21 economies of Apec would like to have its membership expanded but it was aware that "if we have too many members, it will become very unwieldy."

The present Apec members, he said, are not reflective of the entire Pacific Rim because many countries have been left out.

"But it cannot be helped since if we have too many (members), we can't function. Those who are in already, I think they are contributing," he stressed.

Commenting on the three new members, he said Russia felt it has a lot in common with the rest of the economies of the regional forum, particularly with East Asia.

"(Russia's Prime Minister Yevgeny) Primakov finds the (Apec) discussion very useful," said Dr Mahathir.

On Vietnam, he said the country was very keen to be a part of the whole grouping and it believed that its induction would be very useful to project the country to the rest of the world.

"As far as as Peru is concerned, (President Alberto) Fujimori thinks that its participation in the Apec process is very enlightening," added Dr Mahathir.

--BERNAMA

AD SHY