

31/01/1999

Financial crisis focus of G-15 Summit

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Malaysia will explain its method of coping with economic problems at the Group of 15 Summit next month, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said today.

The explanation will include selective exchange control, the loosening of the credit crunch and the lowering of interest rates and how this had led to positive signs in the country's economic recovery.

"We are not saying the method adopted by Malaysia is the only one to resolve the crisis but we have had positive results so far," Syed Hamid said.

It is expected that the focus of the summit will continue to be the current global financial crisis. Other topics will include the multilateral trading system and trade and economic co-operation among member states.

"Wherever possible, the Group will use the occasion to consult and co-ordinate on positions that it will adopt at the forthcoming Third Ministerial Meeting of the World Trade Organisation," he said.

Syed Hamid, who will attend his first international meeting as Foreign Minister, said the grouping had moved closer towards its goal of encouraging trade between countries of the South.

Foreign direct investment among members increased by 24 per cent to RM61.7 billion in 1997 while Malaysian trade with these members increased by 17.9 per cent in the first 11 months of 1998, despite the crisis.

The G-15 Summit, to be held in Montego Bay, Jamaica, will have the highest attendance of heads of Government. Twelve countries have confirmed they will be represented by their heads of Government.

"We will have a quorum for this meeting. We used to average nine heads of Government. Last year, there were 12 and it is good that this trend has continued.

"Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir has attended every meeting. We are a great believer in the G-15. Malaysia would not attend at the highest level if we did not consider it relevant," Syed Hamid said.

At the meeting from Feb 4 to 12, Sri Lanka will be admitted as the 17th member of the grouping.

The other members are Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, Peru, Senegal, Venezuela and Zimbabwe.

Those who have not yet confirmed attendance by their heads of Government are India, Indonesia, Nigeria, Kenya and Brazil.

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