

21 JUNE 2000

Mahathir-G15

G15 MEMBERS KEEN TO STEP UP COOPERATION TO DEAL WITH GLOBALISATION

By: Ahmad Zukiman Zain

CAIRO, June 21 (Bernama) -- Members of the Group of 15 Developing Countries (G15) are increasingly serious about stepping up cooperation in dealing with the globalisation issue as they fear being controlled by developed nations, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said G15 leaders who attended the group's 10th summit, which ended here yesterday, paid close attention to such issues after having treated them lightly previously.

"I feel this G15 (summit) is more meaningful and it looks like they (leaders) are really worried about the possibility of being marginalised by the big powers," he told Malaysian journalists after meeting Malaysian students here.

Dr Mahathir was among nine heads of government who attended the two-day summit. Five countries were represented by vice-presidents and three by foreign ministers.

The Prime Minister said many countries were keen to join the group whose membership expanded to 19 at this summit with the inclusion of Iran and Colombia.

"We don't want too many countries to join (G15), we prefer it if those who join are more committed to G15," he said when asked if the increase in membership would strengthen the group.

Established in 1989, the group held its first summit in Kuala Lumpur a year later.

Asked to elaborate on the question of globalisation affecting member states, Dr Mahathir said there was still a lack of understanding on the issue per se and the effect of globalisation.

"There is a request for us to provide them with information and we will circulate a paper written by (Malaysian-based Third World affairs commentator) Martin Khor because that is a comprehensive study of how globalisation affects developing countries," he said.

Dr Mahathir also held several bilateral meetings with the other leaders on the sidelines of the G15 summit and delivered a talk at the Cairo University on the successful measures taken by the country in overcoming the Asian financial crisis.

On his meeting with Egyptian Prime Minister Dr Atef Ebeid this morning, Dr Mahathir said both countries agreed to promote strong ties especially in promoting trade.

"We agreed to establish a Malaysia House in Cairo which will display Malaysian goods, while an Egypt House will be set up in Kuala Lumpur to exhibit Egyptian products," he said.

Malaysia will also maintain its close ties with the Al-Azhar University where Malaysians make up the largest group of foreign students.

Currently there are nearly 5,700 Malaysian students pursuing Islamic and Arabic studies.

Dr Mahathir, accompanied by his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, later left for a private visit to Italy. He is scheduled to return home next Monday.

--BERNAMA

azz sk