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Rafidah, Zeti sought for fresh G-15 news stories

Ahmad A. Talib in Cairo

CAIRO, Mon: "Two lady delegates? Senior delegates?" This was the question from a local female journalist at the Press Centre of the on-going Group of 15 (G-15) meeting which opened here today. When told so, the journalist hurried off trying to get an interview with both Malaysians.

The journalist had apparently been scanning the television and newspapers trying to find "something different" to file her report on the 10th summit which was opened by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak at the heavily-guarded Presidential Headquarters.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is leading the Malaysian delegation which includes Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar, International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz and Bank Negara Governor Datuk Dr Zeti Akhtar Aziz.

The opening ceremony was carried live on Egyptian television, but press coverage was restricted to short visuals by television cameramen and print media photographers.

A Press Centre has been set up at Sonesta Hotel with faxing, Internet and telephone services. Several television sets are located at several corners, but speeches of speakers are not readily available, though.

After lunch, the leaders trooped off to their retreat, at the Mirage Golf Club just outside the city. They are expected to discuss issues facing the G15 in a more relaxed and informal surrounding.

Rafidah, who arrived here earlier and met her counterparts when trade ministers held their conference, had already raised the WTO issue, saying that G-15 members must "work together in concrete terms" to help determine the agenda for future multilateral trade negotiations.

Her suggestion was for the G-15 to implement a two-tier plan of action - one at the ministerial level and the other at the level of negotiators in Geneva, where the WTO is headquartered.

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