

29 MAY 2001

SYED HAMID-MEETING

M'SIA WANTS G15 NATIONS TO PLACE IMPORTANCE ON SUMMIT

By: Mohd Kamel Othman

JAKARTA, May 29 (Bernama) -- Malaysia wants the Group of 15 (G15) Developing Nations to place importance on the Summits in future with leaders representing member countries, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said here today.

Malaysia would like to see more state leaders taking part in G15 Summits, he told Malaysian reporters here today.

He said that he agreed that the Summit is important and is held every year, but member countries should place it on a higher level with heads of government representing the countries.

Syed Hamid, who brought this up at the G15 foreign ministers' ministerial meeting yesterday, said that the frequency of summits held was one of the issues discussed at the meeting.

When asked on the exact number of heads of state and government attending the 11th Summit which begins here tomorrow, he said that "if six or nine (heads of state and government) are attending, it would not create a problem."

"We have yet to get full attendance (of heads of state and government). Each representative has a mandate from their heads of government," he said.

According to a report, only seven G15 heads of state and government would attend the Summit this time, which is being held for the first time in Indonesia since the G15 was set up in 1989.

Apart from Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid, the other leaders are Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, Senegal President Abdoulaye Wade, Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez, Egyptian Prime Minister Atef Ebeid, Jamaican Prime Minister James Patterson and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Initially, nine heads of state and government were scheduled to attend the Summit.

Algerian president Abdelaziz Bouteflika is expected to be represented by speaker of the country's parliament, while Zimbabwe president Robert Mugabe cancelled his Jakarta trip due to the death of Zimbabwe's Defence Minister Moven Mahachi in a car crash on Saturday.

Syed Hamid said that the absence of some of the G15 heads of state and government need not mean that the meeting is not important. What is more important is the issue discussed.

Every year, G15 member countries hold meetings and the progress reports indicated that there were achievements which had benefited the south-south countries.

As such, he said the G15 nations reiterated their stand to strengthen relationships among member countries.

Syed Hamid said that he had attended several sessions of the G15 meetings and had seen the differences.

"I notice the interest and the seriousness now. They know that to become stronger, they need to cooperate in the context of south-south. The Group of 15 Developing Nations is a successful group," he said. -- BERNAMA

MKO AA FR