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G8-SYED HAMID

MALAYSIA MUST NOT CEASE TO ARTICULATE VIEWS

By: Yong Soo Heong

EVIAN, (France) June 1 (Bernama) -- Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar today says that Malaysia must not cease to articulate its views at international fora if it wants its stand to be heard and known by others.

"If we cease to talk, then we would never be heard at all," he told a briefing for Malaysian journalists on Saturday night on the significance of the invitation of French president Jacques Chirac to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to attend the Enlarged Group of Eight (G8) Summit here.

Syed Hamid said Dr Mahathir had agreed to attend because he (Dr Mahathir) saw the significance of the invitation.

The G8 groups France, Germany, Russia, Canada, Italy, Japan, Britain and the United States.

The world leaders who are gathered here this weekend include German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, Russian President Vladimir Putin, US President George W. Bush, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien and Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi.

The enlarged summit also includes leaders from 12 other developing countries besides Malaysia and key institutions such as the United Nations International Monetary Fund, World Bank, World Trade Organisation.

Among them are UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

Syed Hamid said that after Sept 11 and the invasion into Iraq, developing countries had less room to express themselves.

Hence, he said it was a great honour for Malaysia when Chirac invited Dr Mahathir to the Evian summit where he was expected to talk on international co-operation and development, especially with regard to trade-related matters.

Syed Hamid said Dr Mahathir would not just be speaking as the Prime Minister of Malaysia but also Chairman of the 116-nation Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and his thoughts and views would reflect the concerns of developing countries.

The NAM chairmanship gives him the clout and ability to be accepted that he is not just speaking as the lone voice of Malaysia (but as chairman of the 116-nation movement as well) as his ideas and views reflect the concerns of the developing countries," he said.

For instance, he said while France had given special emphasis on NEPAD or the New Partnership for Africa's Development at the Enlarged G8 Summit, the members of NEPAD were also members of NAM.

On Saturday, Dr Mahathir met South African president Thabo Mbeki to exchange views on a number of issues including economic development, tourism and the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

Syed Hamid said the meeting had enabled the two leaders to strategise on what to speak at Evian on to avoid duplication in view of the limited time.

The summit is held on an informal basis and starts with a working lunch on Sunday and is expected to last until 6 p.m. here.

However, leaders of NEPAD member countries from South Africa, Nigeria, Senegal, Egypt and Algeria attending the Enlarged G8 Summit will have a working dinner.

Dr Mahathir, who is staying in Lausanne on the Swiss side of Lake

Geneva, will travel by boat across the lake just before midday for the enlarged summit to be held at Hotel Royal, which is perched on a hill overlooking the touristy lakeside town of Evian.

He is also expected to have a brief meeting with Chirac just before the working lunch and will also meet Russian leader Putin after lunch.

Dr Mahathir will return to Lausanne in the evening to attend a dinner hosted by Malaysia's ambassador to Switzerland, Datuk Ismail Mustapha.

Before leaving Lausanne for Japan on Monday, Dr Mahathir will hold talks with China's President Hu Jintao. -- BERNAMA

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