

# Malaysia to coax Japan to join grouping

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — Malaysia will try to convince Japan to join the proposed East-Asian Economic Grouping (EAEG) despite attempts by the United States to persuade it to boycott the Malaysian proposal.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Government would explain to Japan the benefits of establishing the grouping when Japan's Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu visits Malaysia at the end of April.

He said prior to the visit, International Trade and Industries Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz would visit Japan to discuss the proposal with her counterpart and foreign ministers in Japan.

"We are not surprised the US is doing this. It is a fact that they do not like anyone forming a group without including them.

"As for us, we accept this as their stand and we will continue to coax other countries to join although the US opposes it," he told newsmen after chairing the Umno supreme council meeting here.

The Prime Minister was asked to comment on efforts by the US to persuade Japan and Indonesia to boycott Malaysia's efforts to form the proposed EAEG.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia would not launch a campaign to counter the US efforts but would highlight the benefits of such a grouping.

He said Japan had not rejected the proposal but had yet to make a decision while Indonesia's President Suharto agreed to the proposal but felt that it needed to be discussed in detail by officials.

Dr Mahathir reiterated that the proposed grouping would not be a trading bloc to negate the roles of the Asia Pacific Economic Corporation (Apec) and Asean.

The EAEG is to enable member countries to come up with a common stand at negotiations of the Uruguay Round, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and other meetings on international trade.