

# Dr M happy

# over <sup>(P)</sup> accord on ~~EAEG~~ **EAEC**

By WONG CHUN WAI and  
**ZULKIFLI TALIB**

DATUK Seri Dr Mahathir Mo-  
**hamad** said **he** was **happy** that  
~~Asean had~~ reached **an** agree-  
ment on the formation of the  
East Asian Economic Caucus  
(**EAEC**), adding "that's all we  
asked for.

He said the objectives would  
remain the same as that of the  
EAEG despite the name change.

"Well, I would say a rose by  
any name is just as sweet. What  
is **important is** what it does."

Dr Mahathir added the  
change in name did not mean  
the concept had varied from  
Malaysia's concept of a loose  
consultative forum.

"It has never been our con-  
tention to have a formal group-  
ing like **Asean**," he said.

"It has always been our idea  
that the EAEG is a forum where  
countries of East Asia can meet  
to discuss common trade is-  
sues," he said when asked to  
comment on the endorsement  
of the group by the **Asean**  
**economic** minister's meeting on  
Tuesday with slight changes.

He was speaking to newsmen  
yesterday after opening the  
Commonwealth Finance Minis-  
ters' Meeting.

Dr Mahathir hoped that other  
countries in the region would  
now rally behind **the caucus**.

He said it was hoped that the  
caucus would help less devel-  
oped countries in the group be-  
cause it was only when these  
countries prospered that they  
can become good markets with-  
in the **group**.

Asked **whether** he thought  
that Japan should be the natural  
leader of the caucus, he replied:

"I have always emphasised  
that there is no leader."

He said the caucus was a  
grouping of equals but added  
that perhaps someone might be  
chosen as its spokesman.

"He **may** well come from the  
smallest **country**. The main  
thing is that **what** the **spokes-**  
**man** says must reflect the  
views of the caucus," he added.

As to whether he was pre-  
pared to lead the caucus, Dr  
Mahathir replied: "Me? What  
for?"