

Japan interested but seems 'prevented' from joining

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JAPAN is interested in joining the proposed East Asia Economic Caucus but is being prevented by certain quarters from doing so, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, said yesterday.

"I've spoken to many Japanese who have said that they want to join the EAEC," the Prime Minister he said at a Press conference at the end of the three-day Umno General Assembly yesterday.

Asked whether there were differing views in Japan on the question of its membership, Dr Mahathir replied in the affirmative.

Dr Mahathir, who is the Umno president, was asked to comment on a report in

Japan quoting a Japanese Minister as saying that the country would only be a member of the EAEC if the United States was accepted into it.

The Prime Minister said the United States cannot be accepted because it is not an East Asian country.

Asked whether this condition was unreasonable, Dr Mahathir said: "Actually, all this is an excuse for not wanting to join. If Japan does not want to be a member because of pressure from the United States, and our influence (on Japan) is not as strong as that of the US, then we accept."

He said Japan's stand would not be an obstacle.

"We will continue with

our efforts with our Asean friends. We will contact other nations that are within the East Asian region."

On the call by Umno delegates for the party leadership to be firm when advising the rulers and royal households against any abuse of their privileges, Dr Mahathir said: "It is up to the person who informs the Rulers to determine the manner in which to do so."

On whether he will be seeking an audience with the Rulers to inform them of the criticisms by Umno delegates, he said, "I think they know...they also read the papers. If I am asked, I will tell."

On the call for the Constitution to be amended to

curb these abuses, Dr Mahathir said, "We have not reached that level yet".

To a question on whether the Government will amend the Legal Profession Act as suggested earlier by Justice Minister Syed Abdul Hamid Albar, Dr Mahathir said, "Whatever action to be taken by the Government which is allowed under the Constitution will be considered."

On his hard hitting criticisms against the liar Council, Dr Mahathir said, "I am certain that they will give an inaccurate account of the speeches made during proceedings in the past three days to the American Bar Association, world jurist and other similar bodies."

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