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Mahathir-Apec

MAHATHIR REPEATS GIVING APEC SUMMIT A MISS

from Ali Mamat.

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BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, Aug 3 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad repeated today that he would stay away from a summit meeting of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) in Seattle in November.

He said he decided against attending the meeting because what Malaysia had feared had come to pass - that Apec would be turned into a formal body to help the stronger members.

"Our fears that Apec will be manipulated by the major powers have become reality. Initially, it was said that Apec will not need a secretariat but now a secretariat has been set up," he told a press conference at the end of his three-day visit to Brunei Darussalam.

United States' President Bill Clinton had recently proposed the summit of Apec member countries, and Dr Mahathir had said he would not attend the meeting.

Dr Mahathir said a proposal by Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans for Apec to be upgraded to a community showed that the intention from the beginning was for Apec to be a trade grouping to serve the interests of the economically strong countries and not the weak nations. -- more

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"This is what we were afraid of...it was said earlier that Apec will be an informal body which will undertake projects which can be participated in by the less developed countries," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia decided to join Apec on the understanding that its objective was to help weak nations improve their capabilities. --

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