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Mahathir-Apec

KEATING AND GOH TO PERSUADE DR MAHATHIR TO ATTEND APEC SUMMIT

From Kuah Guan Oo

LIMASSOL (Cypus), Oct 21 (Bernama) -- Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating who is scheduled to meet <sup>at</sup> Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad Friday is expected to persuade the Malaysian leader to change his mind and attend the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) summit in Seattle next month. *BIM overseas*

Dr Mahathir had said he would not attend the summit pushed for by the Clinton Administration and he has not, to date, indicated any change of plan.

But Australian newsmen covering the Commonwealth summit here expected the Australian leader, who is meeting Dr Mahathir for the first time since coming to power, to persuade the Prime Minister to change his mind and attend the summit.

Expected from the talks of the two leaders are questions of bilateral ties between the two leaders which took a dive during the days of Keating's predecessor Bob Hawke.

Also expected to talk to Dr Mahathir about attending the Seattle summit, said to be an informal gathering of the 15 Apec countries to breathe more life into the organisation, is Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong of Singapore on Friday.

Goh was reported by the Australian daily "The Australian" Wednesday as having given the strongest endorsement yet of any Southeast Asian leader of Canberra's ambitious agenda for Apec. -- more

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The report said Goh disbanded himself from recent reservations expressed by Malaysian and Thai leaders that Apec might be developing too much of an institutional structure and that the concerns of Southeast Asia were being overwhelmed by bigger players in Apec.

In a special interview with the daily, Goh also said the Asean leaders should come up with new ideas and initiatives on how Apec should move and if they did not, "then of course Asean's role would diminish within Apec."

Among other leaders meeting Dr Mahathir for bilateral talks Friday are Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia of Bangladesh and Prime Minister Dr Ntsu Mokhehle of Lesotho.

Meanwhile, many journalists covering the summit here continue to seek out the Malaysian leader for interviews. At the reception hosted by Commonwealth Secretary-General Chief Emeka Anyaoku Wednesday evening, newsmen made a bee-line for him.

Among the special interviews Dr Mahathir agreed to, is one with David Frost over the BBC's programme "Breakfast with Frost" on Sunday. -- more

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The "Cyprus Mail", the only English language daily in Cyprus, said in its report Thursday that "the main issues of the summit would fail to incite though packed with important and weighty items."

"But until we hear people like Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad of Malaysia, Paul Keating of Australia or Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe filling them out and stirring the pot, as they surely will, the journalists are finding this meeting a hard one to get started on," said the daily in a report by its veteran Chogm (Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting) writer. -- Bernama

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