

PM: Malaysia

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not boycotting

Apec conference

Verbeas Trip

LIMASSOL (Cyprus), Sun. — ~~Datak Seri~~ Dr Mahathir Mohamad said his absence in Seattle next month does not mean Malaysia is boycotting the Asia-Pacific Economic Conference.

The Prime Minister said in Paphos, 70km from here, that Malaysia would still be represented at the ministerial-level Apec meeting.

"That meeting is different from the summit. Malaysia will be attending that meeting but I have said I will not go to the summit," he told foreign journalists covering the weekend retreat of the Commonwealth heads of governments.

Dr Mahathir and the other leaders were scheduled to return here later today for tomorrow's closing session of the 15th Commonwealth Heads of Governments Meeting.

Meanwhile Commonwealth secretary-general Chief Emeka Anyaoku announced the establishment of a Ministerial task force comprising Malaysia, Barbados, Canada, Ghana and Mauritius to press recalcitrant countries to settle the GATT trade liberalisation pact by Dec 15.

He said it was decided at the retreat in Paphos that the team of either Finance or Trade Ministers will visit Bonn, Paris, Tokyo and Washington during the second week of November.

Officials said the exclusion of big power members Britain, Australia and Cana-

da did not indicate any reduction in the status of the team.

The Commonwealth late Friday issued the Limassol Statement On Uruguay Round, calling on the key parties involved in the world trade negotiations to avoid actions which could jeopardise the successful conclusion of the negotiations.

The deadline to conclude talks in the Uruguay Round is Dec 15, "which must be seen as a final deadline", the statement said.

The conclusion of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations is expected to result in new concessions that will further liberalise world trade. Its conclusion is expected to create new trading opportunities with revenue potential for both developed and developing countries estimated around US\$200 billion (RM510 billion).

The leaders concentrated on the developments in South Africa and the African National Congress, which is represented by chairman Thabo Mbeki, made a special appeal to the leaders yesterday to influence dissident blacks and whites to return to negotiations ahead of multiracial elections in South Africa next April.

The leaders also discussed the need to strengthen the presence of the Commonwealth Observer Group in South Africa.