

PM keeps newsmen guessing over Apec

LANGKAWI, Sun. — Whether or not Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad would attend next month's meeting of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) in Osaka, Japan, remained a matter of huge interest among journalists.

Dr Mahathir was repeatedly asked by two Japanese journalists whether he would attend the meeting which is scheduled three weeks from now.

The Prime Minister's answers continued to leave a question mark over whether he would attend. The Japanese journalists took advantage of the Prime Minister's Press conference yesterday after he had launched the inaugural Langkawi International Motorshow here.

Dr Mahathir said his participation in Osaka hinged on his assessment of the objectives of the meeting and on what it could achieve.

"Once I have studied this, I will make a decision."

Dr Mahathir attended the last summit in Jakarta but gave the first one in Seattle, US, a miss.

Dr Mahathir was asked what was holding him back since the Apec meeting starts in just three weeks.

The Prime Minister said he wanted to know how the Apec meeting would affect Malaysia and what the country could gain from it.

Asked whether he expected the Osaka meeting to raise objections against the East Asia Economic Caucus, Dr Mahathir said the Apec meeting was not meant to discuss this.

"But of course, we think that even if people don't agree with the idea, they should not make it difficult for us by raising objections to what we want to do.

"For example, when we wanted to have an Asia-Europe meeting, some countries insisted that Asia must include Australia and New Zealand when we have already decided to the contrary."

Another journalist then pointed out that it was reported the Japanese Government would despatch a special envoy next week to invite Dr Mahathir to attend the Osaka meeting.

To this, the Prime Minister replied: "I will be leaving for Argentina (for the meeting of the Group of 15 countries) so I may not be able to meet the envoy.

"But the Deputy Prime Minister (Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim) will be here. The envoy can meet the Deputy Prime Minister."