

# Prime Minister to attend

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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he will be attending the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) Summit in Osaka on Nov 19.

Dr Mahathir said the Cabinet decided this morning that he should attend.

"The decision was reached after we received reports from our officials and ministers who attended the preliminary meeting. They seemed quite satisfied with the preparations.

"They are happy that this time around we will not have a surprise decision but instead we will have a properly prepared resolution which was made after consultation with everybody," he told reporters at the Pu-

tra World Trade Centre after he had opened the INFO-TECH 95 conference.

He said this in reply to a question on whether he would attend the summit since he had expressed reservations.

Dr Mahathir attended last year's Apec meeting in Jakarta but not the one in 1993 in Seattle.

Asked what he hoped to achieve at the summit, he said: "I hope to speak my

mind and if there is anything I don't agree with, I will have to say I do not agree. If I do agree then I will say yes."

On the future of Apec, Dr Mahathir said he thought that it should not progress towards becoming a trade bloc.

"We think all members should be free to do whatever they like in terms of their trade with other countries and we also think Apec

## Apec summit in Osaka

should focus on the problems of smaller and weaker economies rather than exclusively about opening markets.

He also said Malaysia, from the beginning, had maintained that it did not agree to be tied to opening markets according to any specific schedules, that is by 2010 for developed nations and 2020 for developing nations.

On his views of Afta

(Asean Free Trade Area), Dr Mahathir said it was a good scheme but that its progress should be expedited because it involved a small group only.

Meanwhile, International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz said she would be leading the Malaysian delegation to the Apec ministerial meeting which would be held before the leaders' summit.

"This means that Malay-

sia will be represented in both meetings."

There will be nine members in the delegation, including those from the Foreign Ministry.

Rafidah told a Press conference at her office that the Cabinet agreed to Dr Mahathir's participation because one of the conditions set by Malaysia, that there must be thorough discussions and input by members, was being met.

• Rafidah said previously there were countries which pushed through their own agendas without much consultation among members.

"This time we noticed that it has been done; a lot of meetings have been held at official level. There has been a lack of consensus but Malaysia has been actively participating in these dis-

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## Rafidah to lead delegation for ministerial meeting

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cussions."

Expected to be discussed at the ministerial meeting is the action plan to implement the Bogor Declaration, which was adopted in Indonesia at last year's Apec meeting.

One of the issues is the removal of trade barriers and liberalisation of trade to increase the level of investment and commerce in the Asia Pacific region.

Also to be discussed is the way to increase the level of economic and technical cooperation in 13 sectors among member countries.

Rafidah said one of Malaysia's objectives at Apec would be to ensure that "it does not go off its track" and that in the promotion of

trade liberalisation, there should not be any binding conditions.

"We should want to talk about liberalisation that commensurates with the ability of its member countries (instead of a timetable).

"We do not want Apec to be a negotiating forum. No way will we allow the Apec process to involve trading partners to start negotiating trade-offs in liberalisation or even to have negotiations on tariff cuts and demand reciprocity, for example.

"We have already made our commitments in the Uruguay Round."

She said Malaysia would be satisfied with the meeting if there was no move to make any binding decisions, or efforts by developed countries to open up mar-

kets to their advantage, when these countries had not done the same.

"Apec should be an agenda everybody can subscribe to, not an agenda that belongs to a select group."

• Asked whether the issues surrounding the East Asia Economic Caucus (EAEC) would be brought up at the summit, Rafidah said Apec was not the forum for such discussions.

"However, there may be informal talks on the EAEC."

Apec members comprise Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan and the United States.