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`Apec is about economics, not politics'

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the question of his bilateral meeting with US President Bill Clinton at the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation summit in Kuala Lumpur next month did not arise as Apec was a multilateral conference on economy.

He was commenting on reports quoting a US Administration official as saying Clinton "will not pay the customary visit to Dr Mahathir" as a protest, among others, for the detention of former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

"Why must this be raised? There have been occasions when we skipped meetings hosted by others," he added.

Dr Mahathir also emphasised that Apec was all about economics and nothing to do with politics.

He said there would not be any Apec if there were attempts to change the summit to a political forum. "Then it is no longer Apec. If you want to protest, do it some other time."

Dr Mahathir had expressed the hope that the US would not for the second time oppose Japan's intention to offer loans to ailing Asian economies.

"When Japan proposed the Asian Fund and offered US\$100 billion (RM380 billion), the US pressured Japan to withdraw the proposal because it undermined the power that the International Monetary Fund had over the financial policies of countries in the East.

"Now, Japan has once again offered US\$30 billion as loans to Asian countries. We hope the US will not, once again, oppose it."

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