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Canada to attend Apec summit in November

Zainul Arifin in Ottawa, Canada

CANADIAN Prime Minister Jacques Chretien will attend the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation Economic Leaders Summit in Kuala Lumpur next month despite suggestions that he stay away following the detention of former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and several others under the Internal Security Act.

A spokesman for his office said on Wednesday that he would be in Kuala Lumpur and during that occasion would raise Canadian concern over the arrests with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Earlier in the day Canada's Secretary of State for Asia Raymond Chang told reporters that perhaps Apec 21 member economies should consider moving the meeting to another country.

The purpose was to show displeasure over the arrests, as well as to ensure the safety of visiting heads scheduled to attend the meeting, following fears of street protests during the meeting, from Nov 14-18.

Canada had issued statements expressing concern over the arrests and detention under the ISA, and the clampdown by the authorities on demonstrations by Anwar's supporters.

"We already expressed our views on (the arrest of) Anwar. I don't think he will be protected by Canada refusing to go to Malaysia," said Finance Minister Paul Martin who was also questioned by reporters on the matter.

He was referring to allegations of police brutality against Anwar during his detention. The matter had been widely reported by the Canadian Press.

Last week Australian Deputy Prime Minister Tim Fischer also brought up the suggestion that the Apec meeting be moved to protest Anwar's arrest.

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