

# PM to open East Asia congress

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** A gathering of East Asia community leaders, comprising political, business, academic and media representatives, will take place here early next month.

Former Japanese vice-minister of finance, Dr Eisuke Sakakibara, will be among the delegates at the event, the First East Asia Congress, which will be opened by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Some 1,000 delegates from 13 countries are expected to meet and discuss the future of the region when the congress is held here from Aug 4 to Aug 6.

Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) chairman Tan Sri Dr Noordin Sopiee said the congress would be a defining event in the realisation of a community of East

Asian nations.

"Every single participant will be asked to sign their name in a book which will be compiled, bound and deposited at the National Archive because of its historical significance," he told a press conference at the office of the think-tank yesterday.

Dr Noordin, who is also chairman of the East Asia Economic Centre, said Dr Mahathir will deliver the keynote address and launch the congress.

"Countries in the region have begun to see the inescapable logic of a community of East Asia nations, which was enunciated by Dr Mahathir in 1990.

"This was especially obvious after the 1997 Asian financial crisis, when countries were

very much left to weather the storm themselves," he said.

Dr Noordin said the congress would discuss, among others, topics such as the Asian Monetary Fund, labour migration, the role of East Asia media and the question of building East Asia institutions and evolving the Asean Plus Three into the East Asian Summit.

The congress would be held yearly in the country as a tribute to the courageous efforts of Dr Mahathir to build a community of co-operative peace and prosperity in the region, he said.

Parties interested in the by-invitation-only event can call ISIS at 03-2693-9366 (ext 118/119/120/131/179) or fax 03-2691-2210 / 2691-5435 / 2693-8485.