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PM looking forward to Apec meeting

LANGKAWI, Sun. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight said he was looking forward to attend the Apec leaders' meeting in Bangkok in October.

It was the first time the Prime Minister had indicated he would be joining other leaders from the Asia-Pacific rim countries to the summit, scheduled in the last week of October.

The summit is expected to be the last international meeting to be attended by Dr Mahathir as Prime Minister.

He has announced he would retire from all government and party posts in October.

The Prime Minister made the remarks at a dinner in honour of the Prime Minister of Thailand, Thaksin Shinawatra, at a hotel here. Both leaders are in this resort island for the fourth annual consultation between the Prime Ministers of Malaysia and Thailand.

"In October, Thailand will once again take centre stage when you host the Apec leaders' meeting in Bangkok... I am confident this meeting will be a success. I look forward to being there."

Dr Mahathir said the relationship between Malaysia and Thailand had seen tremendous progress, partly because of the direct interaction approach adopted by the two countries.

"I have always believed that regular contacts and interaction among leaders, officials and people will help foster good relations.

"The personal rapport established is immeasurable," he said, alluding to the meeting in Haadyai last December where Malaysia and Thailand held their Cabinet meeting together informally.

He said he was also encouraged by Thaksin's support to resolve issues identified by both countries.