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Dr M leaves forum early

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SNUBBED?

Anti-TPP organisers claim former PM was not feeling well

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THE normally outspoken Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad turned up at the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) forum in Shah Alam on Saturday but left early without saying a word, apparently due to health reasons.

It is learnt Dr Mahathir was invited to speak at the forum following his criticism of the trade deal, which he claimed would put

the country on the losing end should it come into effect.

At 90, Dr Mahathir has not been in the pink of health. In October last year, he had suffered a bout of fever, coughing and chest pains.

Jointly organised by several non-governmental organisations (NGOs) including the "Bantah TPPA" movement, the forum was led by panellists comprising Third World Network director Chee Yoke Ling, Universiti Malaya law lecturer Professor Gurdial Singh Nijar, Bantah TPPA chairman Mohd Nizam Mahshar and Malaysian Consultative Council of Islamic Organisations president Mohd Azmi Abdul Hamid.

Bantah TPPA deputy chairman Azlan Awang was quoted as saying in an online report that Dr Mahathir was feeling unwell and left two hours after the TPPA Summit

2016 forum began without giving his speech. However, the former prime minister's aide claimed otherwise, but did not clarify the reason behind his early exit.

Azlan said Dr Mahathir, who was initially scheduled to speak at the forum, held at Ideal Convention Centre, decided to attend the event as a guest after seeking his doctor's advice on his health.

"He insisted on being here because he did not want to disappoint the participants, but had to leave early due to his health," said Azlan.

The forum also took a rather controversial turn after Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Abdul Wahid Omar, who was also present, said he was not given the opportunity to clarify certain issues raised by the panellists.

Among others, the panellists claimed that the country's trade independence and state government control over land would be at stake, as well as claiming that there would be a spike in the cost of medicines.

"I was denied the chance to explain because of the organisers' time constraints.

"However, I respect their decision. Perhaps there will be another opportunity for me next time," he said, as reported by Bernama.

In response, Azlan said the organisers were only aware of Wahid's attendance at the eleventh hour and could not allocate sufficient time to allow feedback from the minister.

"But, we are grateful that he had attended the forum to listen to the views aired by the NGOs and panellists on stage," said Azlan.