

# 'West should open markets'

From HARDEV KAUR in Suva, Fiji

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**DATUK Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad** says he is prepared to lend his weight to other members of Commonwealth in the Asia-Pacific region in their dealings with Australia regarding its protectionist policies.

The Prime Minister said that he had long discussions with Mr Malcolm Fraser, the Australian Prime Minister, during his visit to Kuala Lumpur in August.

"I have had my bout with Mr Fraser and feel that we can find a way to solving most of the problems," he added.

Dr Mahathir was speaking to the Press on his arrival at Nausori Airport in Suva to attend the five-day Commonwealth Heads of Government Regional Meeting (CHOGRM) beginning today.

Asked for his views on trade barriers, he said while most small coun-

tries need to protect their own industries, the big countries and the more powerful countries should open up their markets.

"In other words, less protectionism," he added.

The question of rising protectionism will be one of the issues to be discussed by the leaders. A Commonwealth experts group has presented its report to the meeting recommending changes in international trade to help in the discussions.

On his reasons for attending the conference, Dr Mahathir said while he did not attend the last heads of governments meeting in Melbourne, "I want to meet old friends from the Commonwealth, especially from the region and from the small nations."

He added that there was a possibility of co-operation between the small nations and there were areas that would be

worked out.

In this context, the Prime Minister had brought along with him a number of prominent Malaysian businessmen for them to look into areas of possible co-operation.

The businessmen include Mr Tan Koon Swan of Multi-Purpose, Datuk Khoo Kay Peng of Malaysian United Industries, Datuk Salleh Yusoff of Perwira Habib Bank, Encik Hashim Shamsuddin of Bank Bumiputra, Encik Mohammad Abdullah Ang of MAA Holdings and Mr Robert Kuok and Mr Beau Kuok both of Kuok Brothers group.

The presence of this team is a follow up of the Prime Minister's official visit to Fiji in June this year when he also visited Western Samoa and Tonga.

Dr Mahathir had noted that the Malaysian private sector could ex-

tend assistance to these island states especially technical and advisory in areas in which it had the expertise.

Dr Mahathir hoped that the Malaysian programme of assistance within its means, "could spur other developing countries to do the same."

The helping hand that he wants Malaysia to extend highlights the Prime Minister's belief in closer South-South co-operation in the face of disappointing results from the North-South dialogue.

Asked what he expected of the conference, Dr Mahathir said he could not say yet as "this is the first time I am attending it."

He however stressed that smaller conferences such as CHOGRM provided more opportunities for fruitful discussions than larger conferences "where there are too

many people and we can't talk."

Dr Mahathir said that Malaysia was unhappy that a number of countries had still not signed the Law of the Sea Convention. He stressed that it was necessary for agreement to be reached on a worldwide basis on how the resources of the sea beds could be exploited.

He added that it was not fair for the "strong nations to simply hold back because they could do more for themselves."

The Prime Minister said that the Kampuchea issue may be raised in discussions as "the coalition deserved to be supported."

On the possibility of Pakistan's re-entry into the Commonwealth being raised at the meeting, he said that "if it needs to be discussed we will discuss it. Malaysia has no objections to its re-entry."

The conference will be officially opened by the Fijian Governor General Ratu Sir George Cakobau.

After their discussions at Suva on Thursday and Friday, the heads of government will have a weekend retreat at the Pacific Harbour about 50km from Suva. They are expected to continue informal discussions during their retreat.