

# Good response to Dr M's call

NSuAT 17 OCT 1982

SUVA, Sat. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is "very happy" that the 17 Commonwealth nations attending the mini summit here are keen to help each other and the South Pacific island nations.

The Prime Minister said this at a Press conference here late yesterday afternoon after leading off discussions on regional economic and functional cooperation — the thrust of the five-day summit which will end on Monday.

"Yes, I'm very happy to say that everybody is very keen..." he said in reply to a question whether the other countries have responded to his call for concerted and continued efforts to help small nations in the Asia-Pacific region build up their resilience.

Dr Mahathir said after listening to the discussions it was obvious that most countries in the region "do have a

From CHEONG MEI SUI: SUVA, Saturday.

sense of responsibility towards each other and maybe, in some instances, they have succeeded."

Each country, he said, had its own programme. Papua New Guinea, for example, was developing mini hydro projects which could be relevant to other countries.

He said Malaysia felt that even developing countries had something to contribute in terms of helping others.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia "is very interested" in the South Pacific. She has made friends here and "we think it is our duty to come to our friends in whatever forum."

Dr Mahathir, who did not attend the Commonwealth Summit in Melbourne last October, said a small gathering is more practical, and more functional than a large one.

"When you have a very

big meeting like the UN, for example, you are reduced to standing up and making statements to faces that you don't know at all..."

He added that at the mini summit here he personally knew most of the leaders, "so if there is anything to be done with each other or to help each other, it is much easier for us to do."

On how effective the summit here would be in trying to see a way out of the current recession, Dr Mahathir said leaders were pessimistic because they had reason to be so.

"At the moment I don't see any solution. The only one is, of course, if they can bring down the interest rates which are killing international trade."

The 17 heads of Government arrived in Pacific Harbour this morning for a week-end 'retreat'.

The resort "is acknowl-

edged to be the most meticulously planned resort community in the entire South Pacific," says a tourist brochure.

However, it is not really relaxation for the leaders. They will be involved in private, bilateral or multi-lateral discussions.

There is also the important matter of ironing out sensitive areas in the joint communique for Monday.

While others went golfing and big-game fishing, the Malaysian Prime Minister went for a cruise round the harbour to watch the sunset.

With Commonwealth Secretary-General Shridath Ramphal on board, there was speculation that he would try to convince Dr Mahathir to attend next year's Commonwealth Summit in New Delhi.

Dr Mahathir has repeatedly said he preferred small gatherings of leaders.

An exotic Fijian feast is being prepared for the leaders tonight.