

Proposal by

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Dr M on future role of Chogrm

PORT MORESBY,
Tues. — (Datuk Seri Dr

Mahathir Mohamad) is convinced of the usefulness of the Commonwealth Heads of Government's regional interaction but said that these meetings should be held as and when the need arises.

"We think there is merit in Chogrm (Commonwealth Heads of Government Regional Meeting) but probably the thing to do is to have meetings as and when the need arises," the Prime Minister said.

He was responding to questions from Malaysian newsmen in his hotel suite this afternoon.

There had been speculation that the Chogrm tomorrow, the fourth since its initiation by Malcolm Fraser of Australia in 1978, is likely to be the last.

At the third meeting at Suva in Fiji in 1982, Sir Robert Muldoon the then Prime Minister of New Zealand, had expressed grave misgivings. He had said on emerging from the proceedings then that the meeting served only to give sun tans.

Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke had appeared non-committal saying that if the coun-

tries concerned wanted to retain Chogrm as it is he had no objection.

The New Zealand Prime Minister, David Lange, who will attend Chogrm for the first time, had still not spelt out his views but is expected to do so tomorrow.

But whether Australia and New Zealand felt that their own assistance programme under the Pacific Forum for South Pacific Islands was being overlapped by co-operation extended by Malaysia and Asean in general, Dr Mahathir said:

Communique

"Even developed countries like to see co-operation within the region which may lead to Asean-Pacific forum."

Malaysia on its part was seeking friends in the Pacific and that was why it was reaching out to countries such as Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Western Samoa and Tuvalu.

(Dr Mahathir met the leaders of Western Samoa, Tuvalu and Vanuatu at a lunch hosted by Papua New Guinea Prime Minister Michael Somare today.)

Western Samoa is seeking the assistance of "a

couple of Malaysians" to serve in that country in an advisory capacity, said Dr Mahathir.

He recalled that during the confrontation, Malaysia was without friends in the United Nations.

"We should not seek friends only when we are in trouble," he said.

Asked whether Malaysia hoped to gain economically from such a friendship, the Prime Minister said that economic considerations were not everything.

Eighteen nations ranging from India and Bangladesh in the west and the Pacific Islands in the east that once came under the British flag are members of Chogrm.

Tomorrow's Chogrm will be a one-day affair (unlike previous meetings which lasted five days) with a three-day reprieve thrown in.

Sir Michael and Commonwealth Secretary-General Sridath Ramphal will address the meeting.

Dr Mahathir is expected to respond on behalf of the countries present.

A communique will be issued after the afternoon session which will be taken up by reports from various consultative groups.