

# Malaysia wants form to be retained

**8 AUG 1984**  
PORT MORESBY, Tues. — Malaysia would like to see the Commonwealth Heads of Government Regional Meeting (CHOGRM) retained in one form or another. Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad said today: "Some may have a warmer view of it but we think there is merit in CHOGRM. Perhaps, it should be held as and when the need arises (instead of the present biennial meetings)."  
"In between (CHOGRM meetings), the agencies concerned or the Commonwealth Secretariat could implement the programmes agreed upon."  
Dr Mahathir was speaking at an interview in his hotel suite with Malaysian journalists covering his visit here.  
The CHOGRM will be held here tomorrow and will be divided into two sessions — a morning session where the heads of government or their representatives attending the meeting will discuss international and regional issues and an afternoon session where the future of the forum will be decided.  
Australia had recently called for CHOGRM to be de-institutionalised and to be held as and when the need arose.

Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke, who is here for the meeting, is expected to express the view that CHOGRM in its present form had not really been meaningful and was also an expensive affair for many of the developing nations in the Commonwealth.  
Former New Zealand Prime Minister Sir Robert Muldoon had gone one step further and called CHOGRM to be scrapped completely. Emerging from the last CHOGRM session in Fiji, he had said that the meeting served only to give "sun tans."  
However, following his defeat in the New Zealand elections last month, it is not known if the new Prime Minister, David Lange, will press ahead with this line.  
Mr Lange, who will be attending his first CHOGRM session tomorrow, is believed to be adopting a "wait and see" attitude.  
Australia's position on CHOGRM is ironic, given the fact that it was former Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser who initiated the forum and hosted the first CHOGRM session in Sydney in 1978.  
Since then, meetings have been held in New Delhi (1980) and Suva Fiji (1982).  
Dr Mahathir had said in the past that Malaysia preferred such

smaller groupings, which he said were more useful, to bigger conferences such as the Commonwealth Heads of Government meetings where the smaller developing nations hardly had a chance to benefit.  
Dr Mahathir said today that Malaysia's relations with the developed Pacific nations was based mainly on the need to win friends. "We hope to gain friendship. There may come a time when we need their friendship."  
"For instance, during the confrontation with Indonesia we had no friends at all in the United Nations' because we were inward-looking and depending on our traditional friends only," he said.  
He added that there were also several developed countries which wanted to see increased co-operation in the Pacific, especially the Western Pacific.  
"In fact, they seem to be even more keen than we are in this, which may mean in the end a forum of Asean-Pacific co-operation."  
"In any country, there are

bound to be dissenting voices but as far as I am concerned, there is no distinct stand against Asean-Pacific co-operation (in Australia and New Zealand).  
"The Governments of Australia and New Zealand have not voiced, any such stand," he said.  
Asked about his relations with Papua New Guinea Prime Minister Michael Somare, Dr Mahathir replied: "He is a friend."  
He added that the most practical way to implement the technical co-operation agreement he signed this morning with Mr Somare was to make available training services for Papua New Guineans in Malaysia.  
"We can make places for them available in the specific areas they need help. They won't be requesting unreasonable facilities and wherever possible, we will try to accommodate their requests," he said.