

85 (P) Trip overseas

NASSAU (BAHAMAS), OCT 17 (BERNAMA) -- DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD GAVE THE COMMONWEALTH A JOLT WHEN HE SPOKE HIS MIND ON THE PAST AND FUTURE OF THE ORGANISATION AND THE PROBLEMS BEDEVILLING THE WORLD AT THE OPENING OF CHOGM HERE YESTERDAY.

PULLING NO PUNCHES, THE PRIME MINISTER STATED IN CLEAR TERMS MALAYSIA'S STAND ON THE COMMONWEALTH, APARTHEID, THE NAMIBIA ISSUE AND THE WORLD ECONOMY.

HIS CHARACTERISTIC FRANKNESS, HIS PROPENSITY TO CALL A SPADE JUST THAT, DREW APPLAUSE FROM THE GATHERING AT LEAST FOUR TIMES.

ADMITTING THAT HE HAD A JAUNDICED VIEW OF THE COMMONWEALTH, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE ORGANISATION TODAY WAS DIFFERENT FROM WHAT IT WAS WHEN IT STARTED.

IT WAS NO LONGER A CLUB FOR NATIONS FOUNDED BY MIGRANTS FROM EUROPE. IT WAS NOW, HE SAID, A COLLECTION OF FORMER COLONIES WHICH HAD BEEN PERSUADED TO JOIN THE COMMONWEALTH THROUGH +OBLIQUE+ HINTS THAT THEY WOULD BENEFIT FROM IT.

THEY HAD, HOWEVER, FOUND THAT THE COMMONWEALTH HAD FAILED TO LIVE UP TO THE PROMISE. -- MORE

CHOGM-REACTION 2 NASSAU (BAHAMAS)

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT IF THE COMMONWEALTH WERE TO BE PERPETUATED, IT MUST ACHIEVE TANGIBLE AND MEANINGFUL RESULTS, IT MUST GIVE SUBSTANCE TO THE TERM +COMMONWEALTH,+ PARTICULARLY FOR THE POORER MEMBERS.

MALAYSIA'S EXPERIENCE WITH THE COMMONWEALTH, HE SAID, HAD NOT ENDEARED THE ORGANISATION TO IT, AND IN FACT THE GOODWILL IT FELT WHEN IT JOINED THE ORGANISATION HAD NOW BEEN WORN THIN WITH THE PASSAGE OF EVENTS AND TIME.

+WE HAVE NOTHING AGAINST THE MAJORITY OF THE MEMBERS WITH WHOM WE HAVE GOOD RELATIONS ANYWAY,+ HE SAID.

+BUT I WOULD SAY THAT GOOD, BAD OR INDIFFERENT, THE RELATIONS WOULD HAVE BEEN THERE WHETHER OR NOT THERE IS A COMMONWEALTH.+

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR WAS EQUALLY BLUNT WHEN HE SPOKE ON THE SOUTH AFRICA ISSUE, DESCRIBING AS +HYPOCRISY+ THE FAILURE ON THE PART OF CERTAIN COUNTRIES TO IMPOSE SANCTIONS AGAINST THE PRETORIA REGIME WHEN AT THE SAME TIME THEY CRITICISED ALLEGED RACISM IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES.

ON THE ECONOMIC ILLS OF THE WORLD TODAY, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID MUCH OF THEM WERE MAN-MADE. -- MORE

CHOGM-REACTION 3 NASSAU (BAHAMAS)

+AND THEY ARE NOT ENTIRELY MADE IN THE OIL-PRODUCING COUNTRIES,+ HE SAID.

IT WAS THE FINANCIAL MISMANAGEMENT OF THE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES, THEIR MASSIVE EXPENDITURES ON ARMS, THEIR PROTECTIONIST POLICIES, THEIR WASTEFUL OVERPRODUCTION OF VARIOUS COMMODITIES, THEIR TRADING PRACTICES THAT HAD BROUGHT ABOUT THE PRESENT ECONOMIC DEPRESSION, HE SAID.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR WAS ONE OF FIVE PRIME MINISTERS WHO GAVE SPEECHES IN RESPONSE TO THE OPENING ADDRESS BY BAHAMIAN PRIME MINISTER SIR LYNDEN PINDLING. THE OTHERS WERE BRIAN MULRONEY (CANADA), RAJIV GANDHI (INDIA), ROBERT MUGABE (ZIMBABWE) AND BOB HAWKE (AUSTRALIA).

DELEGATES INTERVIEWED AFTER THE OPENING CEREMONY DESCRIBED DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR'S SPEECH AS THE +MOST OPEN.+

+HE SAID WHAT EVERYBODY WANTED TO SAY BUT DID NOT SAY,+ SAID ONE DELEGATE FROM AFRICA.

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CHOGM-REACTION 4 NASSAU (BAHAMAS)

ANOTHER DELEGATE, FROM THE CARIBBEAN, SAID DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR GAVE THE CHOGM A +JOLT+ AND SET THE TONE FOR THE DISCUSSIONS BEGINNING TODAY.

+THIS IS GOING TO BE A HOT MEETING,+ SAID ANOTHER DELEGATE. THE CONSENSUS WAS THAT DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR WAS FORTHRIGHT AND SAID WHAT NEEDED TO BE SAID.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR AND MOST OF THE HEADS OF DELEGATION ATTENDED A RECEPTION GIVEN BY COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY-GENERAL SIR SHRIDATH RAMPHAL FOR THE PRESS TO GET TO KNOW THE COMMONWEALTH LEADERS SOON AFTER THE OPENING CEREMONY.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR WAS AMONG THE LEADERS MOBBED BY PRESSMEN AT THE RECEPTION, MANY OFFERING CONGRATULATIONS ON HIS +FANTASTIC+ SPEECH WHILE OTHERS REQUESTED INTERVIEWS. -- MORE

CHOGM-REACTION 5 NASSAU (BAHAMAS)

HE SAID HE WAS MERELY GIVING HIS OPINION AND THIS WAS WHAT THE FORUM WAS FOR.

THERE HAS, IN FACT, BEEN A DELUGE OF REQUESTS FOR INTERVIEWS WITH DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR FROM HUNDREDS OF JOURNALISTS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD GATHERED HERE TO COVER THE CHOGM.

SOME OF THE REQUESTS WERE MADE THROUGH FOREIGN MINISTER TENGGU AHMAD RITHAUDDEEN.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR IS SCHEDULED TO RETURN HOME ON OCT 19 AND IS PRESSED FOR TIME AND UNLIKELY TO OBLIGE MANY OF THE REQUESTS.

-- BERNAMA
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