

Dr M: There's no alternative to economic sanctions

(P) Mahathir - oversea trips

NST 19 OCT 1985

NASSAU, Fri. — Malaysia does not see any alternative to economic sanctions to bring down the racist South African regime.

Speaking to Malaysian newsmen and, later on, the BBC this morning, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said: "We must strike while the iron is hot. There has never been a similar moment like the present when the white South Africans are most susceptible to international pressure."

The Commonwealth Prime Ministers discussed the apartheid issue only briefly yesterday afternoon, and the issue is expected to be discussed further this morning. Up to about 4.30pm yesterday the Prime Ministers discussed the world political situation in a discussion led by British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

It is understood that Mrs Thatcher refused to discuss the issue of apartheid in her review of the world political situation.

Economic pressures

Britain is opposed to economic sanctions against South Africa called for by the overwhelming majority of Commonwealth nations attending the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting.

The British have not let on what they may have to offer instead.

On being asked if he thinks Mrs Thatcher has something up her sleeves, Dr Mahathir said: "I doubt if it can be very much."

Malaysia is not too enthusiastic of

From MUNIR MAJID

the plan mooted by the Australian Prime Minister Robert Hawke of a series of escalating measures against South Africa ending in economic sanction if necessary.

"Why prolong the process," Dr Mahathir asked. "If this is the approach the Commonwealth wishes to take," the Prime Minister noted, "Malaysia will insist that it be within a clearly limited time frame."

The British attempt at pussyfooting was the result of economic pressures arising from their investments in South Africa. The British were not facing the issues squarely. The country applying sanctions will suffer, as Malaysia has suffered since ceasing

□ More reports on P15

trade with South Africa a long time ago, Dr Mahathir said.

"Also, in the end you will have to accept majority black rule one way or another, sooner or later. Why prolong the suffering and sour the situation further?"

Dr Mahathir does not plan to meet Mrs Thatcher separately on the issue, although opinions would certainly have been exchanged before the day is out.

These exchanges will no doubt, continue driving the course of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers weekend retreat from tomorrow. Dr Mahathir, however, will only be with them this evening and tomorrow before flying home.