

Govt to study C'wealth benefits, says Mahathir

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By OUR REPORTER

THE Government will study the Commonwealth in detail to ascertain the benefits of being a member, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The study will also look into Britain's relationship with other countries especially those outside the Commonwealth, he said.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said yesterday there is a clear distinction between members who are white and others who are coloured within the Commonwealth.

"Details on this aspect are required," he said opening the Umno general assembly in Kuala Lumpur.

"We also know that students from Europe and America who are not Commonwealth members receive special attention while our students are charged very high fees. Indirectly we are assisting the English students and the others," he said.

Stating that it is essential to explain the Government's foreign policy after the re-

cent general elections and the formation of the new Government, he stressed that the Look East policy will be continued because the culture and morality of the East is more acceptable to Malaysians.

In addition, their efforts to develop their country brings greater benefits and "we do not want to copy people who fail."

Dr Mahathir said the Government under Umno's leadership will continue to give priority in relations with Asean as a regional grouping even though the aim of an Asean common market has not yet been realised.

"We will continue our cooperation with Indonesia, Thailand, Brunei and Singapore. The closeness of our relations with the Philippines will be decided after they have formulated their new constitution.

"Singapore has asked for assistance in water supply. As a neighbour Malaysia is prepared to help. While Malaysia is aware of the importance of water to Singapore, Malaysia cannot relegate its own interests," the Prime Minister said.

After Asean, Malaysia will give priority to the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC). Dr Mahathir said Malaysia is keen on cooperating with the Islamic countries even though these countries are not as rich as before.

The third priority in Malaysia's foreign relations will be the Non-Aligned Nations (NAN). Dr Mahathir said the country cannot expect to obtain any assistance from these countries but as a "third force" they act as a balancing force between the Eastern and Western blocks.

"As a small nation Malaysia did not want to take sides with any block. On the other hand it needed friends of its own stature and not a big power that regard us only as a client state or its customer."

On international organisations, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia only supported the United Nations and a number of its agencies. If there is a need to communicate with the whole world Malaysia will use the United Nations forum as is being done in the case of dadah.