

Dr M criticises the ^(P) prophets of doom

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, today criticised the prophets of doom for saying there would be racial violence in Malaysia "very soon".

"The fact that 'very soon' passes by with nothing happening does not deter them.

"Soon they will report again that very soon there will be racial riots in Malaysia," the Prime Minister added when he opened the 33rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Confer-

By NURAINA SAMAD

ence at Parliament House here.

Dr Mahathir said despite the diversity of the country's races, cultures and religions, the people were tolerant and respected one another.

"We get on reasonably well," he added.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia's multi-racial make-up was not of its own making but was thrust upon it during the

colonial period.

Since independence, the country had been carrying out the difficult task of fostering racial harmony.

He cited as an example the fact that the Malays were Muslims and ate only beef and abhorred pork while the Chinese were Taoists or Buddhists who ate pork.

He added that the Indians, on the other hand, were Hindus and ate neither pork nor beef.

prophets of doom

"Theoretically, we cannot even sit down together to eat. But we do, and we do it often," he said.

Dr Mahathir noted that there were reports that some races were badly treated in the country.

"One would think that the people who inflict this on us would appreciate this, appreciate the tolerance of the three major races in Malaysia.

"One would think that we would be helped. But no such

appreciation is forthcoming."

On South Africa's apartheid policy, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia felt strongly that South Africa should be completely ostracised.

The excuses that sanctions would hurt the blacks more than the whites had been disproved by today's realities.

"The blacks are being oppressed, ill-treated and murdered even without sanctions.

"We are only prolonging

their sufferings by half-measures. The only answer is total sanctions and isolation."

Dr Mahathir called on the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) to urge the "doubting Margarets" attending the Commonwealth Heads of Governments meeting in Vancouver to immediately apply sanctions against South Africa.

"Then and then only will the

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Commonwealth be meaningful."

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was still a member of the Commonwealth because it had benefited from the various agencies within it.

He had been critical of the Commonwealth because far too often it did not live up to its name and there was very little understanding among its members.

Dr Mahathir, however, said the CPA was different as it was useful in spreading the role and practice of parliamentary democracy.

This was achieved through the constant exchange of ideas and visits and intermingling of parliamentarians during conferences.

He criticised the tendency of certain countries to ignore the

United Nations as a multilateral organisation in favour of bilateralism or limited small groups.

In many instances, the resolutions adopted at these bilateral meetings did adversely affect many other countries.

He cited as an example the outcome of the meeting of the Group of Seven rich countries which had badly affected many poor countries.

The exchange rates of different currencies had been manipulated so that suddenly poor countries found their external debts doubled and their export earnings reduced.

"We must return to multilateralism. Admittedly the United Nations is cumbersome and some members can be unreasonable.

"But it is the only true representative body of the countries

of the world.

"It can be improved but it must not be bypassed. The CPA, itself a multi-national body, must support multilateralism as exemplified by the United Nations," he said.

On Malaysia's tough dadah laws, Dr Mahathir said the Government made no apologies for them.

"Our youths are being destroyed by this scourge. We consider those who distribute dadah as their destroyers and murderers."

More than 400 delegates from 47 countries are attending the five-day conference.

Also present at the ceremony were Commonwealth Secretary-General Sir Shridath Ramphal, Cabinet Ministers, senior Government officials and members of the diplomatic corps.