

Malaysia's view of C'wealth has changed

By HARDEV KAUR and ADLINM. ZABRI

MALAYSIA has changed its view of the Commonwealth as the organisation itself has changed for the better and is now doing more to help developing member countries. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysia, once critical of the Commonwealth, has reviewed its position.

"As a result of our feeling that the Commonwealth was not doing enough, we instituted a review of the Commonwealth. The review concluded that there are many positive aspects of the Commonwealth.

"Because of this, we have decided to play a more active role in the Commonwealth, and the hosting of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Kuala Lumpur, is a result of that new thinking on the part of Malaysia," he added.

He told a news conference at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC), venue for the CHOGM, in Kuala Lumpur that Malaysia wants to see practical results from the cooperation between the Commonwealth countries.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir, who is chairman of the meeting, noted that at one time the Commonwealth was not doing enough for its poorer members. He added that one area in which they need help is in managing technological changes so that the poor countries will not lose out to the more developed countries.

The poorer developing members, the Prime Minister said, need more help in manpower training to cope with the technological changes and developments taking place. Unless, these changes are properly managed the developing countries must suffer and lose out in the end.

THE decision on the next person to hold the coveted post of Commonwealth secretary-general is likely to be decided by balloting during the coming Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) unless a consensus is reached.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said: "Malaysia is neutral on the issue. We don't mind anybody becoming the new secretary-general but we would prefer to see a consensus," he told a news conference at the Putra World Trade Centre in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. He had earlier briefed journalists on the issues that are likely to be discussed by the meeting.

There are two candidates, Deputy Commonwealth Secretary-General Chief Emeka Anyaoku of Nigeria and former Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser. Incumbent Shridath Ramphal has declined reappointment after 15 years as head of the Commonwealth secretariat.

"At this point of time, we cannot say who is the favoured candidate. As chairman, our duty is really to try to ensure that if there is a balloting, it will be done properly. It is up to the heads of government to decide," Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir added.

Asked on Malaysia's tough **dadah** laws, the Prime Minister said Malaysia **makes no** apology for them adding that it is something that has to be seriously considered. Governments are being threatened by drug traffickers and the possibility of their taking over the government is something that has to be seriously considered.

"We, therefore, need to know what action the Commonwealth has to take to ensure that governments are not easily toppled by drug traffickers," he said.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir stressed the need for international cooperation to combat the menace. He added that Malaysia will sign a bilateral agreement with Britain to enable the confiscation of properties resulting from **dadah** trafficking in either country.

On the question of Common Law, which **supposedly** holds the **Commonwealth** together, the Prime Minister asked: "The ques-

tion about common law is that it is common to whom?" **If it is** common to the British people, it is not necessarily common to the Malaysian people. **We have** our own value system and culture and we should form our own common law.

"To cite a case in Britain, maybe 20 years or 100 years ago, and on that basis make a decision in a Malaysian court **on a** current case, I think is not quite right because there is change with time, there is change with location.

"It is for that reason we do not want to tie **ourselves** to what is known as British **Common** law because we are not **British**. We are Malaysian and we have our own way of thinking, value system and way of deciding how things should be settled."

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir added that he is quite sure that the British are very liberal and will be liberal enough to accept the fact that they cannot impose their role and system on others.