

Dr Mahathir shows his statesmanship

DATUK Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad demonstrated his statesmanship when, as the chairman, he guided the first executive session of CHOGM to a successful selection of the secretariat's new secretary-general.

The choice of a successor to Sir Shridath Ramphal had been seen as a potentially divisive matter by many and had worried the Malaysian Government, who as host,

wanted to avert a bitter battle for the post between two highly-qualified contenders — Chief Emeka Anyaoku and Mr Malcolm Fraser.

However, the entire issue appeared to have been resolved by what Sir Shridath described as "the chairman's skill."

It is learnt that Dr Mahathir adjourned the executive session to allow balloting because he wanted to resolve the se-

lection. America and would not cast a shadow over the remainder of the meeting.

Dr Mahathir's proposal of a secret ballot was initially resisted by some member countries who felt that this was a deviation from the Commonwealth's traditional method of resolving issues by consensus.

However, many other members were receptive

to the proposal which was finally accepted by all.

It was also decided that whoever received the majority vote would be unanimously endorsed.

Dr Mahathir, who spoke to reporters after the three-hour meeting which ended at 6pm, said that three heads of government addressed the meeting: Mrs Margaret Thatcher of Britain, Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew and Dr George Vassiliou

of Cyprus.

"We have learnt quite a lot from the views of the three (leaders)," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said that the meeting would discuss South Africa tomorrow.

He added that he had just received news of the severe earthquake which hit San Francisco yesterday morning and expressed his condolences to the victims and their families.