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UE119 AAE OAN LIB DHC
CHOGM-MAHATHIR (HONG KONG)

KUALALUMPUR, OCT 24 (BERNAMA) -- PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD DID NOT RULE OUT THE POSSIBILITY OF CHANGES TAKING PLACE IN MAINLAND CHINA OVER THE NEXT EIGHT YEARS THAT WOULD INSTIL CONFIDENCE IN THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG TO REMAIN IN THE BRITISH COLONY INSTEAD OF MIGRATING.

HE SAID 1997, THE YEAR HONG KONG WOULD REVERT TO CHINESE RULE, WAS STILL A LONG WAY OFF AND THEY WOULD NOT KNOW WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IN HONG KONG AND IN CHINA IN THAT PERIOD OF TIME.

+WE HAVE SEEN TREMENDOUS CHANGES TAKING PLACE IN MANY PLACES IN THE WORLD AND ONE SHOULD NOT RULE OUT THAT SUCH CHANGES COULD HAPPEN IN CHINA,+ HE SAID IN REFERENCE TO THE PRO-DEMOCRACY CHANGES IN EASTERN EUROPE.

SPEAKING AT A PRESS CONFERENCE AT THE CLOSE OF THE WEEK-LONG COMMONWEALTH SUMMIT HERE, HE SAID +THINGS ARE CHANGING IN CHINA AND MAYBE WE DO NOT HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT HONG KONG BY 1997.+

HE SAID THE COMMONWEALTH LEADERS HAD READ THE MEMORANDUM SUBMITTED BY AN UNOFFICIAL HONG KONG DELEGATION DURING THE SUMMIT. THE DELEGATION HAD MET WITH LEADERS OF FIVE COUNTRIES -- SINGAPORE, BRITAIN, AUSTRALIA, CANADA, NEW ZEALAND -- AND A HIGH-LEVEL INDIAN OFFICIAL. -- MORE
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CHOGM-MAHATHIR (HONGKONG) 2 KUALA LUMPUUR

THE MALAYSIAN LEADER DENIED, IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION, THAT THERE WAS ANY PRESSURE FROM BEIJING OVER THE COMMONWEALTH'S REFERENCE TO HONG KONG IN ITS COMMUNIQUE. HE SAID THE REFERENCE WAS A NARROWING DOWN OF DIFFERENT VIEWS ON THE BRITISH COLONY.

ASKED ABOUT THE ASSISTANCE THAT COULD BE PROVIDED BY SOME COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES AS THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG WERE ANXIOUS ABOUT THEIR FUTURE, HE SAID SINGAPORE HAD INDICATED THAT IT COULD TAKE IN MIGRANTS FROM THE BRITISH COLONY.

IN ADDITION, AUSTRALIA AND CANADA COULD TAKE IN MORE PEOPLE WHILE SOME OTHER COUNTRIES WERE INTERESTED IN ACCEPTING THE +VERY TALENTED+ PEOPLE OF HONG KONG TO CREATE THEIR OWN NEW INDUSTRIES.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID HE WAS SURE THAT THE OTHER COMMONWEALTH LEADERS COULD COME UP WITH NEW IDEAS ON THE HONG KONG QUESTION AND +ONE IDEA COULD BE TO CREATE CONDITIONS FOR THE HONG KONG PEOPLE TO STAY AFTER 1997.+

ON THE STEPS TO BE TAKEN TO BAN THE PELAGIC DRIFT GILL-NETTING IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC, PARTICULARLY BY JAPAN, HE SAID THE COMMONWEALTH COULD TALK TO JAPAN AND IF POSSIBLE BRING PRESSURE ON JAPAN. -- MORE
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U EI22 AAE OAN LIB DHC
CHOGM-MAHATHIR (HONG KONG) 3 KUALA LUMPUR

+WE WILL TRY TO TALK TO OTHER AGENCIES AND THE-UNITED NATIONS,
EITHER AS THE COMMONWEALTH OR INDIVIDUALLY.

+THE PROBLEM IS THAT UNTIL LATELY, VERY FEW PEOPLE REALISE WHAT
IS MEANT BY THE WALL OF DEATH -- FISHING NETS 10 TO 20 MILES LONG
THAT SWEEP UP PRACTICALLY EVERYTHING SWIMMING IN THE SEA,+ HE SAID.

HE SAID THIS KIND OF FISHING WOULD MEAN A BLEAK FUTURE FOR
EVERYONE AND IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR IT (DRIFT NET IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC
AND TANGLE NET IN THE CARRIBEAN) BE STOPPED ENTIRELY.

THE COMMONWEALTH LEADERS IN THEIR COMMUNIQUE HAD COMMENDED THE
TARAWA DECLARATION ON FISHERIES OF JULY 1989 BY -SOUTH PACIFIC
GOVERNMENTS WHICH CALLED FOR THE SUPPORT AND COOPERATION OF THE
INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY FOR THE URGENT CONCLUSION OF AN
INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION TO BAN PELAGIC DRIFT GILL-NETTING.

IN THEIR COMMUNIQUE, THE COMMONWEALTH LEADERS HAD URGED THE
RELEVANT PARTIES AND THEIR GOVERNMENTS TO HEED REGIONAL OPINION AND
ABANDON IMMEDIATELY THIS ENVIRONMENTALLY DISASTROUS FISHING
PRACTICE. - - BERNAMA
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