

# Feather in cap for country and PM

**KUALA LUMPUR, Tues** — The week-long Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) is finally over.

It was an honour for Malaysians to host the largest number of heads of state and Governments — Kings, Presidents and Prime Ministers — in a single gathering.

For Malaysia, acknowledged as a leading champion of Third World views, it was an opportunity to further air the many injustices faced by developing countries in the international economic and political scene.

And for Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr **Mahathir** Mohamad it was yet another feather in his cap as a statesman. His handling of the difficult and sensitive task as chairman of the CHOGM won the praise of other Commonwealth leaders.

He defused the thorny issue of deciding on the

successor to **Secretary-General Sir Shridath Ramphal** by calling for a vote. Before calling for the division Dr Mahathir had obtained the ayes from his counterparts that the winner would be declared unanimous.

While South Africa received wide coverage and seemed to have dominated the summit, it was not the only issue discussed and debated by the leaders.

For Malaysia the highlight of the CHOGM was in getting the Langkawi Declaration on the environment adopted. The Malaysian initiative in wanting the world to read environmental problems in the right perspective, both from the Third World and developed nations' viewpoint, was endorsed without changes to the original draft.

The only hiccup was the mechanism of international funding for environ-

mental care which led to some contention. This was resolved with a compromise — the inclusion of Britain's view that existing agencies be utilised and the Indian call for the Planet Protection Fund it mooted during the recent **Non-Aligned Summit**.

This declaration will form the basis of the approach to environmental issues in international forums, especially the 1992 UN conference on the environment.

Another feature of the declaration is that there should be no links between aid and trade and environmental issues.

"The environment is of concern to developing countries like Malaysia," said Dr Mahathir, adding that somehow the Press found the South Africa issue more newsworthy.

Dr Mahathir said he spoke for about 45 minutes on the environmental issue,

explaining the unfair criticisms levelled against developing countries when the industrial nations had and were still degrading the environment much more.

In this context the Prime Minister noted that even local environmentalists picked up what was said in the Western media. They were not interested in the environment but in politics, and were acting as agents for the so-called Western environmental pressure groups.

With the declaration as the basis, Dr Mahathir felt that Malaysia had to keep on hammering the right perspective at other forums.

Another important Malaysian contribution to this CHOGM was the setting up of a Commonwealth Consultative Group for Technological Management (CCGTM) which Dr Mahathir proposed at the exe-

cutive session yesterday.

Under the CCGTM, there would be more areas of co-operation among member countries without the need for too much additional funds.

While Vancouver gave birth to the Commonwealth distance learning programme, Kuala Lumpur will be remembered for the steps taken to launch the equity fund and the CCGTM.

"Our hosting the CHOGM proved not only our physical capability to organise such a big gathering of leaders but also our ability to deal with substantive issues of international perspective," summed up Dr Mahathir.

He said the hosting of the largest gathering of leaders on our shores had made Malaysian better-known.

And the leaders will have a better understanding of Malaysia.