

Commonwealth dynamic now,

NST 13 MAR 1990

(12)

By Nor Hawa Yunus

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — The Commonwealth is now a more cohesive and dynamic grouping and acknowledged as one of the more successful international organisations, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia was glad to note the transformation, brought about by the changing attitudes among member countries.

"When in its early days the Commonwealth was basically a forum in which the former colonial master held discussions with its former colonies, today it is an undeniable fact that the Commonwealth meeting is a gathering of equals sharing common ideals and aspirations over various matters."

Dr Mahathir noted that the decisions of the Commonwealth were now of some importance outside the organisation itself, adding that several countries "even seemed keen to join it."

Confident

"The present Commonwealth is now acknowledged as one of the more successful international groupings," he said at the Royal Commonwealth Society (Malaysian branch) luncheon in conjunction with Commonwealth Day.

Dr Mahathir said it was gratifying to note that the Commonwealth of today had shed many of the negative traits of its former self.

"Today, this grouping has initiated and adopted many programmes of action which reflect the aspirations of member countries, particularly the developing ones.

"We are beginning to share many of the things that we collectively possess," he said, adding that it might not be long before member countries might be able to share the "common wealth" that the organisation has.

Although previously the Commonwealth had initiated various forms of co-

operation for the benefit of members such as the Colombo Plan and the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation, nevertheless, over major international economic and political issues, its views were divergent and consequently ineffective.

"And more lamentable, was the indifference on the part of some senior Commonwealth members to the pleas and cries for understanding by the less fortunate members regarding their problems."

Fortunately, Dr Mahathir added, this "rather sad commentary" was no longer valid, noting that due to changing circumstances and attitudes, the grouping's more prosperous partners had come to realise that they have a moral responsibility to assist the less developed member nations, which they once depended upon for their wealth and power.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia would continue to contribute to the Commonwealth and would work with member countries for the common good.

Despite being a small developing nation, he added, Malaysia was prepared to share her expertise and experience with member countries of the Commonwealth as well as with those outside the grouping.

He was confident that the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Commonwealth Society (RCS) would continue to carry out its activities aimed at a more effective role in fostering better understanding.

Earlier, RCS president Tan Sri Mohamed Khir Johari congratulated Dr Mahathir for successfully chairing the recent Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) and the meeting in Lusaka between the Commonwealth and African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela.

He said the RCS looked forward to Mr Mandela playing an effective role in the Commonwealth.

Dr Mahathir was made an honorary member of the RCS.

more
says PM