

PM: Government will decide terms of reference for Commonwealth team

# Observers to come after all

26 JUL 1963

By A. Kadir Jasin

**KUALA LUMPUR, Wed.** — The Cabinet today decided to proceed with the plan to invite observers from the Commonwealth countries to witness the coming general election, but on terms of reference to be set by the Government.

The Prime Minister, **Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad**, told the Press at his office here that the Government would be writing to the Commonwealth Secretariat in London soon.

The Cabinet, at its weekly meeting, reviewed the matter and decided that the Government should still invite the observers despite its unhappiness with the conduct of the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Chief Emeka Anyaoku, and the two officials he sent here last week.

Dr Mahathir said the Government was unhappy that the two officials — Sir Anthony Siaguru, the Commonwealth Deputy Secretary-General and Mr Neville Linton, Assistant Director of International Affairs — were here without being officially invited.

Asked what would be the actual role of the observers, the Prime Minister said: "They will be invited to watch our election in the manner that the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom invite foreign dignitaries, including journalists, to watch their elections."

Dr Mahathir said it was never the intention of the Government to allow the observers to meddle

in local politics and with the work of the Election Commission or to make official reports on the conduct of the election.

"We are not inviting a foreign commission like the Cobbold Commission," said the Prime Minister.

The Cobbold Commission, headed by Lord Cobbold, was appointed by the Malayan and the British Governments to study and make recommendations on the changes to the Constitution to allow for the entry of the Borneo States into the Federation of Malaysia in 1963.

The Prime Minister told Parliament on June 21 that the Cabinet had agreed to invite

## □ CHIEF ANYAOKU HAILS CABINET DECISION: P2

Commonwealth observers to watch the coming general election, but last Saturday said he was having second thoughts because he believed that the Election Watch had influenced Chief Anyaoku.

Asked what made him come to the conclusion, Dr Mahathir said the Election Watch, headed by former Lord President Tun Mohamed Suffian Hashim, had sent to the Commonwealth Secretariat its Press statement issued on June 26.

In that statement, Tun Suffian spelt out what he called prerequisites that should be met and certain facilities that should be made available to the observers. Tun Suffian told Dr Mahathir in a letter that he also sent supporting documents.

"I feel that as a result of the letter, the Commonwealth Secretary-General decided to send the two officials on the pretext of wanting to touch base with political parties here.

"I told him that was not neces-

sary and untimely as we have yet to decide on terms of reference for the observers, but he insisted.

"To my surprise, the two officials told me at the end of their meeting with me that they wanted to meet with the Election Watch. I telephoned Chief Anyaoku and he insisted that the officials should meet with the Election Watch. He assured me that they would meet other parties too."

The Prime Minister said he was aware that the officials met representatives of several Government and Opposition parties as well as Tun Haji Omar Ong Yoke Lin. Tun Omar is the head of the Group of Concerned Citizens, which opposes any attempt to undermine the authority and integrity of the Election Commission.

Dr Mahathir said the Cabinet, in today's meeting, came to the conclusion that the Commonwealth Secretary-General had taken a stand on the matter despite the fact that an invitation had yet to be sent to him to send the observers.

"Still, we have decided to go ahead with the invitation, but we will make it absolutely clear to the Commonwealth Secretariat that we will accept the observers only on our terms," he said.

The Prime Minister first mentioned the possibility of inviting the Commonwealth observers to Sir Shridath Ramphal, then Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, in May. Dr Mahathir then informed the Cabinet which agreed to the proposal.

Sir Shridath told the Prime Minister that the Commonwealth Secretariat could organise such a team if there was no objection from the Opposition parties in Malaysia.

"I met Mr Lim Kit Siang, the leader of the Opposition, and told him that I do not want the observers to get involved in local politics. But they can meet the Election Commission. Mr Lim seemed to agree to this," said the Prime Minister.

Dr Mahathir said he was utterly surprised by the action of Chief Anyaoku, adding that while the Secretariat was so concerned with getting the consent of the Opposition, it was not bothered about the stand of the Government.