

MEETING TO MEND TIES

Mahathir: I'm ready to meet Aussie Premier

By Wong Chun Wai

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is prepared to meet Australian Premier Bob Hawke on the strained bilateral ties between Malaysia and Australia.

The Prime Minister told reporters today that he was ready to meet Mr Hawke at the meeting of the High-Level Appraisal Group on the Commonwealth in London in June.

He was commenting on an AFP report which quoted Mr Hawke as saying that he hoped to raise points of contention with his Malaysian counterpart at the meeting.

The meeting will bring together 10 Commonwealth heads of government from Australia, the Bahamas, Britain, Canada, India, Jamaica, Malaysia, Nigeria, Singapore and Zambia to chart new roles for the group in the 1990s and beyond.

The AFP report said Australia hoped that face-to-face talks between heads of government would improve the "delicate" state of relations with Malaysia.

It quoted Mr Hawke as saying that he would meet with Dr Mahathir "with an attitude of open mindedness and of constructive friendship."

In particular, it said, Mr Hawke hoped to discuss propos-

als attributed to Dr Mahathir after the collapse of the Uruguay Round of General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) talks last year for an Asia-Pacific trade group that would exclude Australia.

The report quoted Mr Hawke as saying: "I would hope that as those matters are discussed within the region, it would be seen that that sort of exclusion would not be appropriate."

It said Mr Hawke had urged the Australian press to show more sensitivity towards other countries which "don't have the same historical backgrounds, the same institutions, the same constitution as we do."

Replying to allegations that he had not answered calls from Mr Hawke, Dr Mahathir said he did not remember receiving any call from him.

Last week, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia would try to maintain "a proper" relationship with Australia which, he said, considered itself more superior.

He said Australia had criticised Malaysia as "barbaric and uncivilised" when action was taken against Australian drug traffickers and as "undemocratic" when *Operasi Lallang* was conducted to curb unrest in the country.

He also said that certain quarters had used various methods, including films and documentaries, to frighten away potential investors from Malaysia.