

CHOGM:MAHATHIR R HAPPY WITH DRAFT OF HARARE DECLARATION

CHOGM-Mahathir

From Kuala Lumpur 00

(P) Dr. M. - oversee trips

HARARE, Oct 16 (Bernama) -- Malaysia is happy that the draft Harare Declaration to be issued at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) opening here today does not contain anything that goes against the country's stand and principles on issues like good government, aid and human rights.

+Its content does not contradict our stand,+ Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad told Malaysian newsmen last night after chairing a day-long meeting of the Commonwealth High Level Appraisal Group (HLAG).

Other heads of government in the group were Prime Ministers Bob Hawke of Australia, Sir Lynden Pindling of Bahamas, John Major of Britain, Brian Mulroney of Canada, Narasimha Rao of India, Goh Chok Tong of Singapore and President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia.

The HLAG was set up during the Commonwealth summit in Kuala Lumpur in 1989 with the mandate to review and chart new directions and role of the 50-member organisation in-to the 1990s and beyond. -- more

♥16/10/10-31MST

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The Harare Declaration is to be issued at the end of the week-long summit on Tuesday.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the draft might not be as strongly worded as Malaysia wanted but the ideas were the same.

Senior officials of the HLAG met three times to work out a draft for the 10 heads of government to consider today but the British took them by surprise by presenting its own draft.

This led to speculation in the corridors of the summit that the HLAG was divided between the British on one side and the rest on the other side.

+The British draft was essentially the same thing, (with ours) but only re-worded. It was then decided by the heads of government that we could use the British draft but we need to emphasize certain matters which are of concern to the developing member countries,+ Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said.

Among the issues agreed at the HLAG which Malaysia was satisfied with, were the questions of +good government+, a Commonwealth terminology for democracy, and the pegging of aid to human rights and democratic processes of the recipient countries. -- more

♥16/10/10-23MST

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He said +Initially, there were some misgivings (over these issues)... and Singapore and Malaysia and some other countries voiced their opinions on these.

+It was then clarified that it was not going to be some kind of arbitrary judgment by the donor countries.+

'They were satisfied with that stand, he added.

Asked why the British, as a member of the HLAG, should come out with a separate draft, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the situation was like that of a horse and a camel; the horse was designed by a man and the camel by a committee but they represented the same thing.

He added: +The 10 heads of government feel that we could live with the British draft.

+It is not a question of pleasing (the British) but a matter of expediency.+ -- more

♥16/10/10-32MST

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Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said they agreed that the HLAG was not talking about the lack of good government in the Commonwealth countries but some countries of the world where there was absolutely no liberty and where dictatorship was prevalent.

During their discussions on the Commonwealth observers' group to monitor elections in member countries, it was pointed out that the work of the group was not an enquiry.

The observers' group should satisfy itself during its mission that the laws and regulations did not prevent the people from going to the polls free from obstacles to the rights of the citizens to participate in elections. -- Bernama

♥16/10/11-14MST