

Dr M happy with draft of Harare Declaration

From HARDEV KAUR: Harare, Oct 16

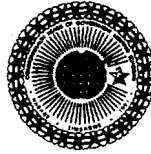
MALAYSIA is happy with the ideas expressed in the proposals for the Harare Commonwealth Declaration even though the wording may not be as strong. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the ideas are no different from those he expressed in his recent address to the United Nations.

True to form, the Prime Minister in his speech at the UN called "a spade a spade". However, the Commonwealth in its declaration is expected to use language that will be acceptable to all members, developed and developing alike.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir told the Malaysian press that the decisions were "no different". The Harare Commonwealth Declaration is expected to touch on the various issues relating to the changing world economic environment, changes in South Africa and the phased removal of sanctions, the future of the Commonwealth and its role in the 1990s and beyond, democracy, human rights and good governance.

The Prime Minister had earlier chaired the meeting of the High Level

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Appraisal Group (HLAG) which is charting the future role for the Commonwealth. The group, set up in Kuala Lumpur in 1989, comprises two presidents and eight prime ministers. They are from Canada, Australia, Britain, Zimba-

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bwe, Jamaica, Singapore, Nigeria and Zambia.

The officials had drafted the proposals which formed the basis for discussions. At the same time, the British also submitted their proposal to the meeting

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which contained essentially the same thing, but reworded. The meeting decided to use the British draft as it "is shorter" and does emphasise certain matters that are of concern to developing countries.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir added that the question of "good governance" was discussed at length. It was pointed out to the meeting that the developing countries, including Malaysia, understand what good governance means.

While the question of aid and the human rights issue were not specifically brought up, the Prime Minister said they related to the question of good governance.

Another issue was the question of observer groups. While previously there were no clear guidelines for the observer groups on elections, they have now been thrashed out.

These observer groups are not an inquiry group, therefore they should satisfy themselves that the laws and regulations allow for fair and free elections, and that during the election itself there is no obstruction of the citizens' right to participate in the election.

Asked about the group's stand on South Africa, the Prime Minister said it was felt that there was need to meet ANC president Nelson Mandela to plan what needed to be done by the Commonwealth.

As a result, a meeting was organised with Mr Mandela and four heads of government — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir as chairman of the group of 10, President

Kenneth Kaunda as chairman of the frontline states, chairman of the Organisation of OAU President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe and Commonwealth secretary general Chief Emeka Anyaoku.

Asked about the phased lifting of sanctions as proposed by the Committee of Foreign Ministers on Southern Africa, the Prime Minister said they were not discussed in detail but will be dealt with by the full Commonwealth Heads of Governments Meeting (CHOGM) which begins today.

He, however, added that there are still obstacles that need to be overcome. There are different groups and pressures at work within South Africa that the Commonwealth will have to consider in making a decision.

Asked whether the differences in opinion with regard to tying aid to human rights issues and the British draft for the HLAG will be divisive, the Prime Minister said initially there was some misgivings.

Malaysia, Singapore and some other countries voiced concern but it was then clarified that this would not be an arbitrary judgment on the part of the developed countries. "In view of this, we are satisfied," he said.

The Prime Minister agreed that the Harare CHOGM will be a "turning point" for the Commonwealth. The world is at the crossroads with the changing world environment and the Commonwealth must take cognizance of these changes and developments.