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Chogm-Media

BRITISH PRESS FILES 20 REQUESTS TO MEET DR MAHATHIR

By: Wan Ahmad Hulaimi

EDINBURGH, Oct 24 (Bernama) -- British media representatives have so far filed 20 requests for meetings with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed who is here to attend the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM).

Dr Mahathir's arrival had been much awaited by the media here as it had missed him at the preliminary business conference in London on Wednesday, which the Prime Minister was unable to attend because of flu.

In his speech to students here yesterday after receiving the honorary fellowship of the Royal College of Physicians, Dr Mahathir said that keeping quiet while the Malaysian ringgit was being eroded by massive selling by speculators was like sitting quietly in a tiger's cage hoping not to be devoured.

In his address at the Commonwealth meeting, Dr Mahathir is expected to speak about the inequalities in world economy in the face of global trade "liberalisation" and "deregulation".

As usual the media here is ever on the lookout for clouds of controversy hanging over CHOGM, which has now come back to Britain after 20 years and before the start, it looked like the expulsion of Nigeria, now in suspension, was imminent.

But the threat had disappeared when it was learnt yesterday that CMAG, the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group, a special committee with a two-year life span with its mandate being renewed by subsequent CHOGM meetings, agreed to give Nigeria until October next year to put its house in order.

CMAF's brief is to promote the cause of good governance in the Commonwealth and to bring the delinquent government back to the cause of democracy, and free elections. Malaysia is on the committee in the person of Tan Sri Musa Hitam, former deputy prime minister.

It is understood that Britain and Canada were the two most active countries in the committee promoting the expulsion of Nigeria with Malaysia and the African states holding out against taking further action until October to give Nigeria its last chance to introduce free elections.

The Nigerians have earlier threatened to gate-crash CHOGM to give their side of the story, but the view of CMAG members is that they had already heard Nigeria's views when a delegation arrived here last year and when CMAG members themselves had been to Nigeria.

Moves in Nigeria seem to indicate that the military rulers are trying to legitimise themselves by restructuring political parties to enable them to gain into the body politic by legitimate elections. -- BERNAMA

WAN AAM