

20/08/1997

KL may chip in for C'wealth office in NY

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MALAYSIA will consider contributing to Commonwealth's initiative to set up an office in New York to facilitate smaller member countries, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said yesterday.

The Commonwealth is said to require some US\$600,000 (US\$1 = RM2.80) to set up the office.

Abdullah, speaking to reporters after meeting Commonwealth secretary-general Chief Emeka Anyaoku in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, said the quantum of Malaysia's contribution has yet to be decided.

"There are many Commonwealth member countries that cannot afford to set up an office in New York because of high costs.

"Therefore, Commonwealth member countries that can afford to assist financially should do so since smaller countries are also part of the Commonwealth family," Abdullah said.

Meanwhile, Anyaoku said he is satisfied with his five-day visit to Malaysia as a preparation of the 53-nation Commonwealth's biennial summit in October which will be held at Edinburgh, Scotland.

"Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will be addressing the inaugural Commonwealth Business Forum prior to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting.

"The prime ministers of Britain, Canada, Australia, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Barbados have also been invited to address the forum," Anyaoku said.

He also said that the meeting in Edinburgh will discuss how best to secure and defend the economies of Commonwealth members in light of the currency speculation which had affected several of its members.

Anyaoku said Commonwealth leaders at the meeting will also review global political development of special concern to the grouping and address the question of new membership.

"The Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group will meet next month to formulate its recommendations to Commonwealth leaders regarding Nigeria and Sierra Leone, the two remaining military regimes in the Commonwealth," he said.

He added that as Nigeria is still under suspension, it will be unlikely that it will be able to participate in the Kuala Lumpur Commonwealth Games next year.

Anyaoku also requested Malaysia to consider contributing to several Commonwealth initiatives such as the Centre of Islamic Studies in Oxford and a rain forest research project in Guyana.

During his stay in Malaysia, Anyaoku met with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

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