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Zimbabwe-CMAG  
ZIMBABWE TO TOP AGENDA AT TOMORROW'S CMAG MEETING

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COOLUM, Australia, Feb 28 (Bernama) - Even though Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe is unlikely to attend the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) beginning here on Saturday, its possible suspension from the Commonwealth remains a hot issue here.

This issue will be discussed at the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) meeting here tomorrow, which will then make a proposal on the matter for discussion by the Commonwealth Heads of Government.

Malaysia is represented by Tan Sri Musa Hitam who is Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's Special Representative in the group which also includes host Australia, Britain, Canada, Negeria, Botswana, Barbados and Bangladesh.

Zimbabwe on which sanctions had been imposed by the United States and the European Union holds presidential elections on March 9 and 10 and reports from most media from that country are focused on the steps or tactics being employed by Mugabe to remain in power.

Among the actions taken by Mugabe was to accuse the leader of the opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Changes (MDC), Morgan Tsvangirai and several leaders of the party of committing treason by plotting to assassinate the President.

News reports quoted several non-governmental organisations as accusing members of Mugabe's party, the Zanu-PF, of involvement in kidnappings and torture of opposition party members.

Zimbabwe was also involved in the issue of seizing white Zimbabwean farmers' land and victimising and ill-treating them, although they were citizens.

The irony of these developments is that the statement (Harare Declaration) on democracy, justice and human rights, principles held in high esteem by the Commonwealth, was issued at the 1991 CHOGM in Harare when Mugabe hosted the meeting in his nation's capital city.

Britain has been leading a number of CMAG member nations in demanding that Zimbabwe be suspended from the Commonwealth.

Britain's proposal could not be implemented because countries such as Malaysia, Canada and Negeria wanted to give Zimbabwe a chance to rectify the situation.

Australia which was urged by the country's opposition leader not to invite Zimbabwe to the CHOGM had to abide by its obligations as host nation to invite all countries so long as they are members of the Commonwealth.

Some groups assume that the CMAG will give Zimbabwe another opportunity to put things right at home and not suspend its membership of the Commonwealth at least until the Presidential elections are over.

They are of the view that if the election results favoured Mugabe, then Zimbabwe can be suspended as a member of the Commonwealth.

However if the results did not favour Mugabe, then the country will not come under pressure from the Commonwealth, the EU or the United States.

Even though the CMAG will make a decision on Zimbabwe tomorrow, it will not be made public until after it had been discussed at the CHOGM on Saturday.

-- BERNAMA  
AZH AHH AAM