

Dr M's 'straight talk' makes an impression

NEW DELHI, Wed. —

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's straight talking reputation in Malaysia has spread to the non-aligned movement with his blunt speech yesterday where he pointed fingers at Vietnam for invading Kampuchea, the Soviet Union for occupying Afghanistan and the Western industrialised countries for causing the current economic crisis.

The King of Nepal was so impressed that he sent his secretary across the conference hall to tell Dr Mahathir that that was the best speech the King had heard in the two days of the meeting.

Dr Mahathir graciously walked over to the King, shook hands

and had a small chat.

President Zia ul-Haq of Pakistan and Bangladesh's Lt. Gen. Ershad also congratulated the Prime Minister for a speech that many said had "hit the nail on the head, touched the nerves of a lot of people".

Contrast

Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach was seen walking out of the conference hall towards the end of Dr Mahathir's speech, but only after hearing the Prime Minister's bitter dosage on Vietnam's violations of the principles of non-alignment.

The major Indian newspapers also quoted the Prime Minister on its front pages, contrasting his speech with Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong's.

While everyone had thought the war of words over Kampuchea was over with the Foreign Ministers' conference, Dr Mahathir and Mr Dong brought it back to the Summit with their forceful viewpoints.

While Dr Mahathir demanded that Vietnam withdraw its troops from Kampuchea, Mr Dong, who had spoken earlier,

said Vietnam would not withdraw until all danger from outside interference (meaning China) in Kampuchea was eliminated.

While Dr Mahathir attacked the Soviet Union for its occupation of Afghanistan, Mr Dong attacked China for its collusion with the US to sabotage the three Indo-Chinese States.

According to Malaysian sources, Mr Co Thach, at the opening of the Summit, had gone up to his Malaysian counterpart Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie, slapped his back and told him to let the past day's war of words be bygones.

This was an attempt by Mr Thach to hint to Malaysia to water down its policy speech and not attack Vietnam. But no one was about to suggest that to Dr Mahathir.

Several observers also noticed that Mr Dong's usual raised clasped hands at the end of a speech yesterday met with limpid claps compared with the thunderous ovations the old revolutionary used to receive in non-aligned halls.

And it was not without satisfaction that Asean delegates noticed the silence when Mr Dong and Cuba's Fidel Castro hugged each other on stage after the opening ceremony on Monday.

"They're crying on each other's shoulders because they've been put in the dock," commented one Asean delegate.

From ZAINAH ANWAR