

# Dr M keeps up the verve, vigour

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SINCE taking office as Prime Minister in July 1981 (Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad) has initiated moves and policy changes which have given new directions to Malaysian foreign policy.

In the area of Malaysia's foreign relations, he has exerted the same vigour and verve that he has demonstrated in initiating change at the of domestic policy level.

Generally, the Prime Ministers in Malaysia have jealously guarded their prerogative to assert their leadership positions on issues relating to the nation's foreign policy.

Certainly Dr Mahathir is an exception. If at all, he has made it clear on more than one occasion that it is the Prime Minister who initiates high-level policy changes.

This tradition of strong leadership in the nation's external relations has been firmly and continuously reinforced in the past two years.

The formulation of foreign policy is not the monopoly of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as foreign policy is a composite of a country's defence, political, economic, trade and cultural policies.

The roots of foreign policy are found in a country's political, economic and social structures.

and maintained on the basis of these cornerstones over the last decade.

Since the time of Tun Abdul Razak, changes in political leadership have not signalled any fundamental shifts in the foreign policy posture of Kuala Lumpur.

While the changes

sensus resolution.

According to this resolution, the Secretary-General of the United Nations has been directed to "prepare a comprehensive, factual and objective study on all aspects of Antarctica taking fully into account the Antarctic treaty system and other relevant factors".

Dr Mahathir has repeatedly called for Antarctica and its resources to be defined as part of the "common heritage of mankind" and to be placed under a wider international regime.

Another strand which has emerged in a distinct manner in the conduct of Malaysia's external relations is the forging of close relations with the newer and smaller States that have achieved independence rather recently.

The Prime Minister's visit to the Pacific island States of Fiji, Western Samoa, Tonga, Papua New Guinea, Maldives and the visits of some of the leaders of these countries to Malaysia under-

Within the sphere of the Islamic community of nations, Malaysia is playing a dynamic role in the deliberations of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference.

Malaysia has in recent years carved out a niche for itself as an activist and committed member in the Islamic world.

Malaysia is currently involved in mediation efforts to solve the Iran-Iraq conflict.

From the foreign policy perspective, there are two important elements which stand out in the Mahathir Administration.

One is its strong support for the cause of the Palestinian people and the other is its reaction towards the Islamic revolution in Iran.

Malaysia has supported the struggle for the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) in the past.

This support in the past had been at a subdued level. Under Dr Mahathir's

in Malaysia's commitment to the Palestinian cause between the Mahathir Administration and previous administrations.

The Islamic revolution in Iran has developed new dimensions in the interaction of Malaysia with the world of Islam. One is the external dimension.

Since the overthrow of the regime of the Shah, Malaysia has been drawn into mediation efforts focussing on the Iran-Iraq conflict through the Organisation of the Islamic Conference.

Currently, Malaysia is the chairman of the OIC committee trying to seek ways and means to settle the conflict.

The second dimension that the Islamic revolution in Iran has for Malaysia is the impact that it has had on Islamic fundamentalism both in this country and in general throughout the world.

The current political leadership in Malaysia is acutely aware of the impact of the Islamic revolution in Iran on the so-

Some Ministries of Foreign Affairs, seem to be 'foreign' Ministries in terms of the outlook of their personnel, the work atmosphere and the attitudes prevailing by comparison with other Government departments and agencies involved with national affairs and programmes.

In a manner that is both distinctive and daring, Dr Mahathir brings into focus the integrative element which is crucial for a well defined and balanced policy, containing new thrusts and yet retaining many of the cardinal and traditional planks of Malaysia's foreign policy.

Traditionally Malaysian foreign policy is made up of the following elements:

- Adherence to the philosophy of non-alignment in international affairs and active membership in Asean; and.

- Commitment to the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and support of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations Organisation.

One feature that continues to mark both the continuity and stability of political order in Malaysia has been the continuous upholding of these planks in the external relations developed

have not been fundamental, the period of the Mahathir Administration has witnessed a new shaping of old policies and programmes.

Within the non-aligned group of nations, Malaysia has assumed a more active and assertive role.

Non-alignment to Malaysia today has not just meant a passive adherence to the sanctimonious declaration of the principles and ideas of the non-aligned philosophy.

The Antarctic initiative has demonstrated this vividly. Malaysia, together with a group of non-aligned nations sharing the same commitment on this issue, has pressed for a reconsideration of the present regime governing the Antarctic area.

This issue has been taken up at various forums, particularly the General Assembly of the United Nations and the summit meeting of the non-aligned movement in New Delhi in 1983.

Although Malaysia, together with Bermuda and Antigua, were not successful in, inserting the item on the Antarctic agenda of the General Assembly in 1983, subsequent discussion of the item in the political committee of the United Nations resulted in a con-

score this.

In the relationship between Malaysia and these countries, Malaysia is emerging as a source of technical assistance and co-operation.

It signals, in fact, the unfolding of what one may call an era of South-South co-operation in a small, yet highly significant manner.

The classic pattern of technical assistance flowing from the Western industrial bloc of nations to the Third World countries has been given a new orientation which could form the basis for other South-South co-operation programmes among the community of Third World countries.

leadership, the diplomatic and political energies of Malaysia have been marshalled to provide support for the struggle of the Palestinian people and the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

The commitment of Malaysia to the Palestinian cause was strongly indicated by the hosting of the Asian Regional Conference on the Question of Palestine in May 1983 in Kuala Lumpur.

The Kuala Lumpur Declaration that resulted from the Asian Regional Conference highlights the change in emphasis

cio-political Islamic forces in the country.

On this matter, the governmental authorities have been discreet and judicious' in toning down the impact of the Iranian Islamic revolution from serving as a model for Islamic political forces with revolutionary and republican objectives.

In October 1983, the Prime Minister warned Islamic fundamentalist groups against seeking to establish political institutions of a republican nature which were contrary to the Malaysian Constitution