

# HK daily touches on PM's style at the helm

From RITA GOMEZ

HONG KONG, Thurs. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has the prospect of bringing in a new team to make his Look East policy work, a leading Hong Kong English daily said today.

The *South China Morning Post* said in an editorial that since Dr Mahathir took office from Datuk Hussein Onn three years ago, the Prime Minister has displayed a more vigorous leadership both domestically and in foreign policy.

Domestically, the constitutional amendments issue was resolved largely in favour of a more democratic and representative rule, the editorial said.

He has also managed the difficult task of channeling the potentially disastrous dispute within the Malaysian Chinese party (MCA) towards a settlement in the courts, the editorial points out.

And within his own party (Umno), he has emerged as the undisputed leader, and though many of the old guard on the Supreme Council were ousted in last week's party convention, this provides him with a chance of bringing in new blood while he, still has

the power to appoint to the council some of his trusted lieutenants who lost their seats during the convention, it said.

With a new team, the Prime Minister could pursue the country's National Economic Policy (NEP) with more vigour, promoting the well-being of the Bumiputeras, the daily said.

The editorial points out too that in the foreign policy arena, Dr Mahathir has endeavoured to break away from the traditional pro-West posture, in particular reliance on and close co-operation with the United Kingdom.

"His quarrels with Britain are well known, further accentuated only last week by his outburst against Hong Kong courts in the Jalil murder trial. More importantly, Malaysia is reducing its economic dependence on the West and is looking towards Japan and other countries in the region to fill in the vacuum."

"And while he appears to have incurred the dis-

pleasure of London authorities, he has taken an even bolder step — trying to establish more friendly dialogue with Peking, which Malaysia has all along suspected of assisting subversive activities in the country.

"Although the Prime Minister travelled to London last year and partially patched up the differences in a meeting with Mrs Margaret Thatcher, much more remains to be done if only to reduce the mutual suspicions now existing between the two countries.

"For while Dr Mahathir's Look East policy is commendable, it will not bring Malaysia any credit to be so antagonistic to a leading member of the Western camp."