

Dr M: We won't neglect role at home

18 AUG 1990

SEREMBAN, Fri. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad assured the people today that the Government will not neglect its domestic responsibilities while actively pursuing a more prominent role in international affairs.

He said the Government was fully aware of its obligations to the people and this should not stop the country from contributing towards resolving some of the world's problems.

At a dialogue with Government servants at the town hall, Dr Mahathir said the Government's role in international affairs stemmed from its commitment to inter-dependence, be it between rich and poor nations or among developing countries.

Dr Mahathir is here on a one-day State visit. He is

accompanied by his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, Menteri Besar Datuk Mohamed Isa Haji Abdul Samad and other State dignitaries.

Responding to a question from a Government servant, Dr Mahathir said: "Malaysia also has a role to play in international affairs, particularly in areas where our expertise is acknowledged and sought.

"We can't wait until we're fully industrialised before we can contribute. Some countries which are less fortunate than us or are in a similar position need our help, and we have to oblige them when we can.

"Malaysia will lose valuable friends if it does not help out internationally. The fact that Malaysia has been accepted into the United Nations Security Council was because it has the

support of its friends who believe that Malaysia could do a good job."

As for its domestic responsibilities, Dr Mahathir said all development work would be carried out and that their implementation would be undertaken without any particular sentiments except the needs of the population.

He also told the civil servants to help control inflation, especially when faced with the prospect of oil price increases following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

"The 860,000 Government servants constitute a significant portion of the consumer population. They can help curb inflationary trends by being careful about their spending.

"The country needs to consolidate its strength. One way of doing this is to

maintain its political stability and by extending the close co-operation between Government servants and the country's administrators."

Dr Mahathir advised Government servants not to gamble with their future. Instead they should make every effort to help the Government continue the present political stability and improve further the nation's economic prosperity, he said.

Dr Mahathir was also asked on the proposed privatisation of the National Electricity Board (NEB). An official from the NEB's Junior Officers' Union wanted Dr Mahathir to elaborate on the terms and conditions of service to be offered to NEB staff when the statutory body was privatised.

Dr Mahathir said the terms and conditions of

service would not be worse than those presently enjoyed by NEB staff.

"In fact, the terms are a lot better than what had been expected."

On Malaysia's position regarding the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Dr Mahathir said it was not Malaysia's policy to take sides when two Islamic nations are in conflict.

Malaysia would rather not see any fighting in West Asia, he said.

Asked to comment on Saudi Arabia's plea for help and the United States' deployment of armed forces personnel in Saudi Arabia, Dr Mahathir said it appeared that the situation was inevitable.

"If a person is about to drown, he will not reject a helping hand, regardless of whose hand it is," he said to the applause of the crowd.