

Keep up with changes,

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By K.P. Waran

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — The Prime Minister urged heads of Malaysian missions abroad to examine from time to time the change in the country's policy priorities in order to maximise their effectiveness.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said if they failed to renew their knowledge of the country's current policies, they would not be able to maximise their role as representatives abroad.

Opening the meeting of heads of foreign missions and the launching of the

Diplomatic and Foreign Relations Institute, Dr Mahathir said they must understand not only the written policies but also the implied ones.

He said this was the first time diplomats were formally trained before being posted abroad. In the past, said the Prime Minister, they were trained through the trial-and-error method upon being transferred abroad as junior officers.

He said there has been a vast change in our foreign policy priorities from that of defending the country's sovereignty after *merdeka* to fighting the menace of com-

munist terrorism and then to more urgent issues related to development and improving the people's living standards.

He said diplomats should be more aware of their duties and give more attention to economic trends and emphasis. In this regard, the Prime Minister said, Malaysia had a duty with other countries to protect and promote free trade.

The Prime Minister said diplomacy has played an important role in averting wars with neighbouring countries.

"In the international political arena, miraculous de-

velopments have taken place, including the fall of the communist ideology in Europe and Russia. While politically we welcome this development, we cannot predict accurately whether this would have an effect on our economy.

"Will the acceptance of free trade in former communist bloc countries affect our investment and exports? Our foreign missions should give this issue attention to ensure that we can draw up steps to face these eventualities," he said.

This showed that international political development had a bearing on the coun-

try's political and economic environment.

On the establishment of the Diplomatic and Foreign Relations Institute, he said it was aimed at giving basic training for future diplomats and for refresher courses.

Since experience alone was insufficient, it was better to have standard courses to cover a range of subjects, including diplomacy, protocol, languages, negotiating abilities and other aspects, he said.

The function was also attended by heads of foreign missions in the country.

Dr Mahathir also drew at-

says PM

attention to the activities of some non-governmental organisations (NGOs), which had lately taken positions to defend the economic interests of developed countries.

These NGOs have started to link restrictions based on environmental issues, human rights, democracy and other matters which were previously not linked to trade, Dr Mahathir said.

"After Europe and America lost their political power with the end of their empires, they are trying to use their economic might to bring back colonial rule," Dr Mahathir said.

He added that such

groups were trying to sabotage the performance and stability of developing countries, especially those whose economies appeared to be challenging theirs.

The groups did this by instigating target groups and urging them to contravene the laws of the target nations.

The groups also succeeded in using interest groups or associations in developing nations to restrict their economic growth, especially regarding the export of goods which competed with those coming from developed countries.