

Iraq finds a friend

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We are fortunate to have friends like Malaysia which stood firm in applying pressure to the United Nations to free Iraq

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ABOUT a year after my posting to Kuala Lumpur, the spirit of altruism among Malaysians and their leaders have made us feel at home. Malaysia's extensive support for the lifting of international economic sanction on Iraq is perhaps, most vocal.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has been quite supportive to requests made at the United Nations for the world body to free Iraq from "the forces of imperialism". And the visit by his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamad Ali to Baghdad recently was a strong indicator of how Malaysians have been with us all this while.

Like Malaysia, Iraq is also a peace-loving nation. Except for one or two incidents which were orchestrated by a superpower, Iraq has been quite active in most international bodies, which include the United Nations, Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC) and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

Stability and prosperity in Iraq has since very ancient times been attributed to great leaders who have accomplished distinguished feats of unifying the country, consolidating the central authority of the state and extending its cultural and political influence into regional and global en-

vironment.

The unification of Iraq started about 2000 BC after being divided with the downfall of the third Ur Dynasty. It was accomplished by Hammurabi, best known for the famous "Code of Hammurabi", in addition to his intellectual, administrative, educational and military achievements.

The July 17-30 1968 revolution marked a new era; after seven centuries and a decade of changing history. The foundation stone was laid for a national government which truly and fully expressed the will and potential of the people.

The most creative efforts were exerted by a leader who felt the suffering of his people, shared their aspiration, fought against imperialists and cherished the heroic deeds of great Iraqi leaders like Salahuddin Al-Ayyubi.

It was leader Saddam Hussein who joined in the 1950s the Arab Baath Socialist Partv. unified its ranks and prepared it to assume power on July 17 1968. Thirteen days later, he set the Revolution on its right course and purged it from extraneous elements on July 30 1968.

He was also behind some important measures which have consolidated the authority of the Revolution and its central power.

Based on a radical, revolutionary theory but in harmony with comprehensive awareness reality and the circumstances surrounding the national and pan-Arab unity. the President has maintained the course of Revolution away from deviation and diversion.

He was responsible for creating an atmosphere of

reconciliation through solving the Kurdish issue within the framework of national unity. Since the early months of the Revolution, he worked out and led the negotiations and even worded the March 11 1970 proclamation of the Kurdish autonomy, which was put into force on March 11 1974.

Other national and democratic measures undertaken by the President were the formation of the National Pan-Arab progressive front in 1973 and the consolidation of political independence on the solid basis of economic independence.

From the early days, leader Saddam Hussein achieved a formidable task by taking the strategic step to enhance economic independence. On June 1 1972. the oil industry was nationalised; first, the Iraqi Petroleum Co and then the remaining foreign shares.

The nationalisation provided the state with enormous financial resources which resulted in a huge increase in the national income, a high standard of living and narrowing the gap between rural and urban areas.