

Mahathir warns off the foreign unions

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad warned today that Malaysia will retaliate against any country, whose union leaders are engaged in a new form of imperialism aimed at damaging Malaysia's economy.

The Deputy Prime Minister, who was refer-

ring to the interference by the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITWF) in the MAS dispute, said: "The ITWF is led by British trade unions which have damaged the British economy. Now they want to spread their influence here."

He said that if the Government could not hit at the unions, it will hit at the country, ap-

parently referring to Britain.

"This foreign interference is not less than a new form of imperialism and the Government regrets that there are people in Malaysia who turn to their former colonial masters, who will damage the country," he said.

"The ITWF was very happy the moment it re-

ceived the letter from the Airlines Employees Union and it used it to threaten the boycott of MAS planes," he said.

On the possibility of the four port unions taking action to back the AEU, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the ports are the lifeline of the country and the Government would not allow it to be sabotaged.

He hinted that the four unions — Port Authority

Staff Union, Harbour Workers' Trade Union, Senior Officers' Association and the Port Ancillary Services Workers Union — contemplated involving themselves in the dispute because of the feeling of affiliation to the ITWF.

The Asian representative of the ITWF, Mr Donald Uren, he said had given the assurance to the port unions and the AEU of the support of the federation at a meeting with their representatives.

Influence

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said: "Mr Uren has used the ITWF's influence to assure the unions that it would, in the name of its solidarity, support them in destroying the commercial shipping links of Malaysia."

"We will not tolerate the sabotage of our shipping links as it would result in shortages of goods including foodstuff and damaging the country's economy," he said.

Goods shortages, he said, could result in inflation and the people would suffer.

"We will not take these actions lightly and as a Government elected by the people, it will take appropriate action," he said.

He said the Government encouraged unionism but would not tolerate unions resorting to illegal action.

He also said the Government did not mind local unions affiliating themselves to international federations but they should not use this to threaten the Government.