

Dr M. Expose anti-GSP advocates' selfish aims

WST 10 JUL 1990

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad wants an exposure of the selfish reasons of individuals and groups lobbying to deny Malaysia the privileges under the Generalised System of Preferences.

The Government needs to explain the reasons for the dubious actions of some people, the Prime Minister said, adding that if this was not done the country's competitive edge would be greatly undermined and industrialisation impeded.

During a one-hour panel interview over RTM's *Isu Semasa* (Current Issues) slot tonight, he elaborated

on several points which had caught the public's attention in recent weeks.

These included the GSP issue and the controversy surrounding the involvement of several local trade unionists, the state of the nation's economy, the NIC status, certain aspects of the proposed amendment to the Education Act, Election Watch and the role of Commonwealth observers in the coming general election and religion.

Dr Mahathir said that it was the duty of all informed individuals and groups to expose the dubious intentions of those who wanted the GSP re-

moved.

"Even though the GSP directly affects the livelihood of only 130,000 of the nation's five million workforce, the Government viewed it seriously and has given it top priority."

He said that following the Government's explanation and the people's comprehension of the matter, individuals who sought American lobbyists' help to remove the GSP privileges had now lost their credibility.

These individuals, he said, believed that they could get what they wanted by getting the GSP removed. They felt that em-

ployers and manufacturers would lose once the privileges were removed, forgetting that those most affected would be the workers.

"The people now understand the GSP issue. If they have not been paying much attention to the issue in the past, they now realise that a withdrawal of the privileges will affect workers and not just the country."

This has resulted in a turnaround by some of the proponents of the removal of the privileges. Several of them appeared to be willing to help the Government retain the GSP privileges, he said.

He told the people not to be taken in by the arguments put forward by foreign interest groups when they seemingly try to champion the cause of labour in this country.

He said industrialised countries had never had any sympathy towards Malaysian workers, even when the country was in no position to compete with them.

But when this country began to compete with them, the industrialised economies showed a sudden interest in Malaysian workers, particularly their rights and other benefits.

"What they actually

want through supposedly wider workers, rights are the resulting industrial unrest, strikes and demands for higher wages. This will make our manufactured items more costly, thus undermining our ability to compete with producers from other countries.

"When this happens, American goods will enjoy better access and their industries will rise again."

The ordinary workers should be warned against the potential danger facing them if they were to follow blindly the demands of their leaders, many of whom have vested political interest.

Asked whether the Government plans to introduce legislation to control the operations of these individuals, Dr Mahathir said laws alone could not guarantee that these individuals would cease their undermining exercise.

"Laws will make them conclude that the Government is trying to curb their basic rights. Therefore, it is important for the people to realise that some of these laws are initiated to protect the people and not to suppress them."