

PM: SUPPORTERS OF GSP REMOVAL WON'T GIVE UP

By Paul Gabriel

ALOR STAR, Thurs. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad expects certain quarters in the country to renew their efforts to get the GSP withdrawn although the US District Court had dismissed a suit by American labour groups.

The Prime Minister said today these quarters would step up their moves to get the International Labour Rights and Education Research Fund (ILREF) and interested parties in other developed countries to pursue the matter "until their objectives of crippling our economy are met."

He said the local groups were unhappy with the growth of the country's economy and the abun-

dant job opportunities.

He said he also expected them to back moves by US officials to "strengthen" the GSP law once it was up for renewal in 1993.

"I do not blame US officials or American bodies for wanting to pursue the GSP issue because any country would want to protect the interest of their own workforce.

"But what saddens me is that we have people here who prefer to help foreign workers than our own. They are clamouring for the removal of the GSP to affect the country's economy," he told reporters on arrival at the Sultan Abdul Halim airport here this evening.

Dr Mahathir was commenting on reports today on the US court's dismiss-

al of the suit against President George Bush and several of his administration members for allegedly failing to enforce workers-rights provisions of the GSP.

Also rejected was another move by the ILREF and other groups to obtain a court order that would have forced the United States Trade Representative to accept for review GSP petitions on Malaysia.

A US official had said the decision would signal to Congressman Donald Pease, a member of the House of Representatives Ways and Means Committee, to "strengthen" the GSP law once it was up for renewal in 1993.

Asked how the Government would deal with these local quarters, Dr

Mahathir said: "We are a democratic country, and we have all sorts of people.

"There are those who are patriotic and work to protect our interests, but there are also those who only pretend to protect our workers but are striving for foreign interests."

In Kuala Lumpur, Bernama quoted Human Resources Minister Datuk Lim Ah Lek as saying that US labour groups were making efforts to deny Malaysia the benefits of the GSP because they envy the country's rapid economic growth.

He said their efforts to get the trading privileges withdrawn from Malaysia were motivated by self-interest on the pretext of championing the rights of Malaysian workers.

Welcoming the US court decision, Datuk Lim said: "They (US labour groups) have worked on distorted facts to serve their own interests."

He reminded those who intended to criticise Malaysia's labour laws to check their facts first.

"The Malaysian Government's policies on labour are good and in the interest of the workers," he told reporters at the MCA headquarters.

He said: "Actually, they envy our economic growth and the rapid flow of foreign investments into our country."

Foreign investments are expected to increase significantly because of the resounding victory of the Barisan Nasional in the general elections, he added.