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Mahathir - Gorbachev ''

SHAH ALAM, Aug 20 (Bernama) -- Malaysia will monitor developments in the Soviet Union before making any decisions on its relations with that country, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

+We will watch,+ he told reporters here when asked about the status of Malaysia's relations with the Soviet Union following the ouster of President Mikhail Gorbachev yesterday. -- more

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The Prime Minister said the Western countries were partly to blame for the overthrow of President Gorbachev for failing to give full support to the reforms undertaken by the Soviet leader.

+To a certain extent, the West should be blamed because they are more intent on what they call "democracy" rather than to help the Soviet Union get the benefit of a free market system,+ he said after launching the Farmers' Livestock Breeders' and Fishermen's Day here.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said a free market system was not easy to implement, especially in the Soviet Union which had been under Communist rule for more than 70 years.

He added that the Soviet Union faced problems in this area because it did not have the capital, know-how, management expertise and the entrepreneurs.

He said: +Everybody is bent upon getting the most out of Russia rather than to rehabilitate its economy.

+And, because the economy has failed under the present system, it gives room and reason for the conservatives or the hardliners to stage a comeback now because the credibility of Gorbachev is gone.+ -- more

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The Western powers were more keen to impose various legislations to dismantle the communist system, rather than to help the Soviet Union, despite Gorbachev being humble enough to try to have a close rapport with them, he added.

In view of the cold response by the West to Gorbachev's efforts, the Soviets were frustrated thus resulting in the coup, he said.

+Seeing (that) Gorbachev was very daring to abolish the Communist system, the Western powers should have given full assistance to Russia,+ he added. -- Bernama

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