

CNS1395

R CE 20-08 00180 EA079

aae tbe

LEAD Mahathir - Corbachev (replacing earlier item)

SHAH ALAM, Aug 20 (Bernama) -- Western countries are partly to blame for the overthrow of Soviet President Mikhail Corbachev for failing to give full support to his reform programmes, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

+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 told reporters after launching the Farmers', Livestock Breeders' and Fishermen's Day celebrations 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 lacked the capital, know-how, management expertise and entrepreneurs.

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

♥20/08/18-25MST

CNS1397

R CE 20-08 00187 EA080

aae tbe

LEAD Mahathir - Corbachev 2 Shah Alam

+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 Corbachev is gone.+

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

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

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

The Prime Minister said Malaysia would monitor developments in the Soviet Union before making any decisions on its relations with that country.

+We will watch,+ he said when asked about the status of Malaysia's relations with the Soviet Union following the ouster of President Corbachev yesterday. -- more

♥20/08/18-27MST

CNS1398

R GE 20-08 00148 EA081

aae tbe

LEAD Mahathir - Gorbachev 3 (last) Shah Alam

In his first reaction late last night to the coup in the Soviet Union, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said it would be regrettable if communist hardliners had taken over as it would have adverse effects on world peace and stability and on the Soviet Union and its relationship with other countries.

He added: +We do not know whether the hardliners have taken over. The new leaders have said they would not reverse the processes started by Gorbachev.

+If the hardliners were to return to their old ways then there will be bad repercussions for the peace and stability of the world.

+We hope they will not return to their old ways and instead focus on calming the situation in the country and reviving their economy.+ -- Bernama

▼20/08/18-27MST

CNS1536

R GE 20-08 00152 EF777

aae tbe

LEAD Mahathir - Gorbachev 4 Shah Alam (reopens E475)

Meanwhile, Soviet Ambassador to Malaysia Encik A.I. Khmelnitski met Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi at Wisma Putra to explain the developments in his country.

Datuk Abdullah said after the 45-minute meeting: +Malaysia would continue to follow the developments closely so we can, if necessary, make appropriate adjustments in our policy regarding our relationship with them.+

He said for the time being, there was no change in bilateral and diplomatic ties between Malaysia and the Soviet Union.

Datuk Abdullah said the Malaysian embassy in Moscow reported that the situation was not alarming though armoured tanks could be seen all over the place. It said that the embassy officials and their families were safe.

After the meeting, Mexican Charge d'Affaires Jorge Dominquez presented his credentials to Datuk Abdullah. -- Bernama

▼20/08/21-20MST