

Keeping tabs on Soviet crisis

AUG 2 1991

By K.P. Waran

SHAH ALAM, Tues. — Malaysia will monitor further developments in the Soviet Union before deciding on the course of its relations with that country, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Responding to reporters' questions on the status of the relationship between the two countries following the change of leadership in the Kremlin, he said: "We will watch the situation."

He said Western powers were partly to blame for the toppling of Mr Gorbachev since they were reluctant to provide assistance to the Soviet Union when Mr Gorbachev asked for it.

"Even when Mr Gorbachev humbled himself, they were more keen on imposing their type of 'democracy' and dismantling the communist system rather than helping the country."

"When the people of USSR found that Mr Gorbachev's attempts to be friendly with Western powers were not similarly reciprocated and, at the same time, the economic situation in the country worsened they became disappointed with Mr Gorbachev's ways."

"This resulted in Mr Gorbachev losing his credibility and in view of the cold response by the West to his efforts, the Soviets were frustrated, therefore resulting in his overthrow," he said after launching the Farmers, Livestock Breeders and Fishermen Day celebrations at the Agricultural Park here.

Dr Mahathir said that

since many of the republics wanted to break away from the Soviet Union and the hardliners in the Communist Party did not want to allow this to happen, they seized power.

He added that since Mr Gorbachev was intent on wiping out communism, Western powers should have given him their full support and financial assistance to his country but were reluctant and preferred to give priority to other issues.

"All his efforts failed because he did not get the right type of treatment from the Western powers."

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

"We have a parallel in this country where we wanted the Malays to participate in the economy but many did not have the capital, know-how or management expertise. However, the Government stepped in to help them."

"But in the case of the Soviet Union, nobody wants to help the country, everybody wants to get the most out of it rather than help rehabilitate its economy."

"Because the economy failed, it gives room and reason for the hardliners to stage a comeback since Mr Gorbachev's credibility is gone."