

# Zainal, David 'still guilty'

JUL 1992

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Government's decision not to take action against certain Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) leaders does not make them innocent of the charges made against them.

"The fact remains that these leaders have betrayed the nation. It does not make them not guilty," he told journalists after opening a youth exhibition organised by the MCA in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Dr Mahathir was responding to queries on last Wednesday's Cabinet decision not to penalise MTUC leaders for their collaboration with the International Metalworkers Federation to suspend Malaysia's membership in the International Labour Organisation (ILO) at last month's International Labour Conference in Geneva, Switzerland.

MTUC president Zainal Rampak and secretary-general V. David had earlier yesterday made separate claims that the Cabinet's decision, announced on Thursday by Deputy Prime Minister Ghafar Baba, meant that they are cleared of all charges.

But Dr Mahathir said the reason the Government did not take action against them is because they broke no laws.

"They are smart and they have averted breaking the law, but this does not mean what they did was right. The fact is they are traitors to their own nation. They let Western trade unions use them to sabotage the economy and place the jobs of our

people in peril.

"They live here, they made a home here, they get other things here but they continue to say bad things about the country. It is different if the things they said about the country are true. But they were telling lies about this country.

"We must expose these people. If they break the law, we will take action against them," he added.

Dr Mahathir also said the Government will explain to the rakyat about the treacherous attitude of these leaders.

"Zainal and David said they were championing the workers' interests, but what they did was for personal interests.

"The MTUC is not the problem here. The problem is it is being led by the opposition who has no loyalty to the country. They are willing to badmouth their own country when they are abroad just to ensure they can maintain leadership in large trade unions.

"And we know that as leaders of large trade unions, they receive large monetary allocations from fees and many other benefits. And they can put the whole nation to ransom," he added.

Datuk Lim Ah Lek, the Human Resources Minister, echoed Ghafar's statement that taking action against the MTUC leaders would only be a waste of time and energy.

"We'd rather spend these on the workers," he told newsmen while waiting for the arrival of the Prime Minister at the exhibition.

The minister, who submitted two reports on Zainal's

"misconduct" at the ILO conference and the involvement of MTUC leaders in the anti-Malaysia campaign by the International Metalworkers Federation, said, however, the allegations against these leaders remain.

"We have proof that they did what we accused them of doing. I did say no government will sit back and allow a union to do what the MTUC did to the country. I say now, the Government will not sit back. We will continue to address our efforts and resources at improving the workers' lot," Lim added.

In a news conference in Petaling Jaya earlier, Zainal said the Cabinet's decision "proves that the Government recognised the democratic rights of the MTUC to freedom of speech and to raise a labour dispute at the ILO".

"It is clear to the MTUC that the Government's decision cleared us of all accusations of misconduct. In our minds, our complaint is not tantamount to economic sabotage and neither does it tarnish the country's image," Zainal said.

In a more critical stand, David called for Lim's resignation on grounds that the minister was incapable of handling the "highly sensitive portfolio".

He said in a statement that Lim had tarnished Malaysia by his baseless accusations against the MTUC; for misleading the Government by submitting a "highly inaccurate and biased report" to the Cabinet; and for asserting that electronics workers earn higher wages and benefits than their counterparts in other industries.