

PM: Malaysia to follow

By LIM HOCK CHYE

- 20 OCT 1993

NEW YORK: Malaysia will not allow criticisms of its laws and policies by outsiders to disorientate and destabilise the nation, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

The nation would shape its policies and style of administration to the local situation, he said.

Addressing the US-Asean Business Council dinner here on Thursday night, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia's strategy combined economic, social, legal, labour and educational tools.

"Malaysia has welcomed foreign investments ever since it gained in-

dependence and the attitude and policy have paid off. All we ask is for some understanding and sympathy for our system and policies."

Dr Mahathir said it was unfortunate that the United States tended to link trade with non-trade matters such as human rights issues, labour practices, the environment, and economic policies.

"The result of scrutinising these issues is to stifle trade," he said.

For some years now, there had been threats of withdrawal because of alleged restrictions on the freedom of association of workers in the electronics sector, Dr Mahathir said.

However, even in the United States, not all workers were unionised.

Malaysia, he said, preferred in-house unions rather than national trade unions as "powerful national unions have been known to destroy the economy of even developed countries."

He stressed Malaysia's labour policy was in the interest of the workers.

On trade with the United States, Dr Mahathir said it was regrettable that with the exception of the petroleum and electronics sector, there had been few notable invest-

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ments by American businesses.

"There is a reluctance to invest in Malaysia," he said.

Malaysia continued to get far more investments from Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore than from the United States, he said.

"It is our desire to encourage and see more investments from the United States, especially from the small- and medium- scale industries."

Dr Mahathir said he was pleased that the present US administration had shown a greater interest in East Asia, especially on trade and

economic ties with the region.

Malaysia, he said, was politically stable and blessed with a young, trainable, and disciplined workforce.

Infrastructure was continually being upgraded and expanded and the Asian Development Bank recently reported Malaysia's banking system was among the best in South-East Asia.

He hoped the US-Asean Business Council could help correct distorted views of Malaysia and bring about not only greater friendship between the two countries, but more US investments.