

# Dr Mahathir shares views with Clinton

NOT 3 MAY 1994

## Foreign Trips From Hardev Kaur

WASHINGTON, Sat. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who has been described as "outspoken, frank and one who does not mince his words", had the full attention of the US President Bill Clinton today.

In addition, his views on various issues, including every current issue, were sought by Clinton who listened with great interest and intent.

Malaysia's permanent representative to the UN Tan Sri Razali Ismail briefing the Malaysian Press on the 70-minute meeting between the two leaders said President Clinton was "genuinely interested in hearing Dr Mahathir's views and his (Clinton's) sincerity came across."

As a result of the meeting,

there is better understanding between the two leaders, who met for the first time, at Clinton's invitation.

They discussed various issues ranging from Bosnia, South Africa, China, Japan, the East Asia Economic Caucus (EAEC), the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), human rights, Asia and the Pacific as well as bilateral issues and the credible showing of the Malaysian economy.

The President was intrigued by Malaysia's gross domestic product growth of above eight per cent and how this has been sustained over a continuous period of several years.

Dr Mahathir explained Malaysia's "success formula" and Clinton and his senior colleagues listened intently. Others present were Vice President Al Gore, US Secretary of State Warren

Christopher and National Security Council Chairman Anthony Lake.

Dr Mahathir told the Press at the North Lawn of the White House later that he had invited Clinton to visit Malaysia on his way to Jakarta to attend the Apec leaders meeting. "I hope he will be able to do that." Asked whether the President will visit Malaysia, Dr Mahathir replied: "At least he didn't say no."

According to Razali, Dr Mahathir reminded the President about trying to push things in the context of comparative advantage and the current debate on minimum international wage levels.

The Prime Minister said that the US has so many comparative advantages — it has networking, capital, technology and in the need to compete it expects "us to

agree to a minimum international wage and this is the only comparative advantage that we have — in comparative low cost labour wage."

Dr Mahathir, according to Razali, described this as "an unfair approach" and the President listened with intent.

Asked on the proposal to link social issues within the context of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and especially the international minimum wage, Dr Mahathir replied that he explained to the President that "while we appreciate the concern for the workers in developing countries... but it could result in workers not getting jobs at all."

This is a possibility because if the developing countries lose their only comparative advantage, low labour costs, they may end up having to close businesses and factories which could put workers out of jobs.

The Prime Minister, asked for his views on human rights and China by a Japanese journalist, said: "I think one should not apply pressure. One should try to convince by pointing out the rights rather than trying to do something that may be interpreted as arm twisting. And that does not apply to China alone but to any country."

Asked whether Clinton agreed with the views expressed by him (Dr Mahathir), the Prime Minister

replied: "He asked for my views and I gave him my views, but then I did not ask whether he would accept my views."

On South Africa, Dr Mahathir told Clinton of the need to assist Nelson Mandela and his new Government to prevent the country "from going into reverse".

The two leaders — a black Mandela and a white F.W. de Klerk — have shown that they can work well together and this bodes well for the future of the country which needs help to generate growth, requires rehabilitation, restoration and construction.

On Clinton's response to the EAEC, Dr Mahathir said: "Well I don't expect a yes or no but I explained (the concept) to him."

Asked whether the two agreed on various issues Dr Mahathir said: "Well, he didn't say that he disagreed with me. On most things he said he agreed. I suppose it includes all the things."

Dr Mahathir left for Bloomington, Indiana, immediately after to attend the conferment ceremony of an honorary doctorate on Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Ali by the State University of Indiana.

He will visit the MacDonnell Douglas plant in St Louis and the Boeing plant in Seattle before leaving for Beijing to address an international conference on China.