

'WRONG TO SAY THAT SOME WORKERS ARE LESS CAPABLE'

PETALING JAYA, N.S.T. 30 JAN 1978
Dr. Mahathir — (Datuk Seri) Mohamad

warned tonight of the danger of the "loose talk" about the production capability of various ethnic groups in Malaysia.

The Deputy Prime Minister said people had often talked loosely about such groups and their productivity relative to their backgrounds.

"This is a dangerously misleading assumption and has been repeatedly proven false," he told a special dinner meeting with members of the Malaysian Association of Productivity here.

"I have had reports from contented companies even in rural areas with less sophisticated labour available and that given the proper training, the labour employed proved as adept and as disciplined and hard-working as the company could wish for.

"Malaysian management has a vital and able resource to work with, to mould and guide. Labour is readily available and whatever its background or ethnic origin, it is uniformly good."

Productivity

The onus, Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir added, rested with the management of a project.

He called on the association to strive to increase the nation's productivity.

He suggested that the association initiate publicity campaigns to make the Malaysian management conscious of their responsibility in productivity.

The campaigns could also be designed to imbibe in the labour a sense of pride in their productivity and the ambition to develop it further.

"This is increasingly important in the context of the growth and development of manufacturing for we are now moving into the stage of attracting not only labour intensive but also high technology projects which require even higher standards from the labour employed," he said.

He expressed the hope that the association would also try to instal new values and ethics based not on monetary rewards alone but also on pride and satisfaction in a job well done.

He said because pride and satisfaction motivated a person, the result would be greater productivity which could contribute not only to the expansion of the business but would also stimulate more investment.

Referring to the other factors, he said despite trends in newly independent nations to be anti-foreign, Malaysia had held steadfastly to her policy of encouraging private investments, both foreign and local.

He admitted that the Government had gone into industry and that certain Government-owned corporations had become monopolies.

"But private industry, except in specific strategic areas, have not been stifled. They have in fact been encouraged and sometimes they have been welcomed as partners of Government-owned enterprises," he said.

"On the whole therefore Government attitude towards investments have not changed along the popular lines taken by most new nations.

Objectives

"It is for private enterprise and as such Government policy can be said to be contributing towards a good investment climate. Certainly the policy has not dampened investments."

He stressed that since Government encouragement for investment was in the interest of its people and country, its policy needed to ensure the achievement of the Government objectives.

Hence, he said, there must be laws to govern investments and laws, by their very nature, must be restrictive, including those to promote investment.

"The ICA (Industrial Coordination Act) is often accused of spoiling the climate. But if there is no ICA there may be a reaction from one section of the population which will not just spoil the climate but can destroy it altogether.

"A policy can only be meaningful if its interpretation in terms of laws and regulations are non-restrictive or minimally restrictive.

"A good investment climate will result if the legal interpretation is in accord with policy," he added.