

Co-operate, PM urges local, foreign workers

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KEMAMAN, Thurs. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today called for better understanding and co-operation between local and foreign workers engaged in major projects in the State...

Disagreements arose whether one was working in a local or foreign organisation. The important thing was to attempt to overcome the problem, the Prime Minister said.

"We can simply resort to the dismissal of a worker. This should not be the aim in trying to find a solution," he said, during a brief meeting with reporters after visiting the Hicom hot-briquetted iron and billet project site in Telok Kalong, about five kilometres north of here.

Dr Mahathir said this in reply to queries from newsmen about two recent incidents involving local and foreign workers.

Satisfaction

He agreed that the big industrial companies could form a committee to look into the welfare of workers and promote understanding among them, which would also help overcome the problem.

This would prevent any untoward incident which could adversely affect the project.

He observed that the root of misunderstanding was often found in differences of approach to work.

"Perhaps, other people (foreigners) are not concerned about how many hours they put in while

we work by the clock. But if we work like they do, problems such as this would not arise."

When asked if local contractors were discriminated against when contracts for major projects were awarded, the Prime Minister said he did not believe they had been unreasonably excluded.

He disagreed that there was such discrimination or favouritism.

However, if such a problem should arise, it could be resolved at State level, he said.

Dr Mahathir said the Federal Government had already determined the policy on the matter and that it was now up to the State Government to implement it.

"As if they (the State Government) dislike the local people. Is there any Sign of this?"

Earlier, Dr Mahathir, accompanied by Datin Dr Siti Hasmah, visited the steel plant.

The project on a 173-acre site is well into its first phase.

The plant is expected to begin full production in April next year. The project costs \$1 billion.

With the push of a button Dr Mahathir installed the equipment for the direct reduction shaft furnace. He expressed satisfaction over the progress of the project since he last visited it early last year.

Also present were Hicom chairman Tan Sri Jamil Jan, Menteri Besar Datuk Haji Wan Mokhtar Ahmad, Agriculture Minister Datuk Manan Othman and senior State officials.