

# PM urged to meet with social interest groups

By AHMAD A. TALIB

P

BT 20 NOV 1955

DATUK Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad should convene a meeting with all social interest groups and trade unions to jointly seek urgent solutions to the country's varied problems, veteran unionist Dr V. David suggested.

The country is going through one of its most difficult periods and suggestions that can help put the country back onto the growth path should be welcomed, he added.

The secretary-general of the Malaysian Trades Union Congress said at a news conference in his Petaling Jaya office yesterday that rising foreign debts have been a big drain on the economy.

"It is increasingly apparent that the gap between the rich and the poor is widening, despite the millions of ringgit poured into various development projects. Racial polarisation has impeded attempts at full national

integration.

"At a time when the next development plan is about to be unveiled, I sincerely suggest that the Prime Minister sit down with the many social interest groups in the country and listen to suggestions which can help eliminate these problems, and eventually restore confidence in the national economy.

"The people, especially the tax payers, have a right to know what are the national priorities during these hard times," he added.

The unionist, a known vocal critic of government policies, was disturbed to see the lack of attention given by the Labour Ministry to increasing retrenchment in the country.

He was puzzled why the government had done little to study the causes of the lay-offs, and how this can be minimised or prevented.

While foreign investments had in the past

contributed considerable employment opportunities, Dr David proposed that future investors be thoroughly screened, particularly their perceptions on social responsibilities and obligations to employees.

There should be "fresh protective legislation" concerning retrenchment benefits to Malaysian workers, so that they will not be left in the lurch should retrenchment be inevitable, he said.

The social unrest and conflict brought about by irresponsible employers will negate whatever attempts by government to improve the quality of life of Malaysians, he said.

Dr David maintained that a tripartite commission between the government, employers and trade unions be established to discuss all possible repercussions of widespread retrenchment.