

Mahathir warns against industrial unrest

ALOR STAR, Thurs. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today warned that the people and the country would suffer if there were to be any industrial unrest.

He said that it would take a longer time for the economy to recover if there were industrial unrest and the people would have to pay the price.

The Prime Minister was asked by reporters on whether the Government was prepared to face any industrial unrest should Cuepacs and MTUC and the Government fail to resolve issues surrounding the Budget proposals tabled in the Parliament recently.

Dr Mahathir said as far as he was concerned, it was not the Government but the people who had to face industrial unrest and the consequences.

"I believe that if there is industrial unrest, it will take a longer time for the economy to recover and the people will have to pay the price. It is not the Government which has to pay the price," he said.

On the meeting proposed by Cuepacs to discuss issues pertaining to pension, housing and car loans for civil servants, Dr Mahathir said he was willing to meet them only if necessary.

"But it is impossible for me to meet everyone on every issue. If the matter can be settled with others, I think it is better for them to meet others first," he said.

"I should be the person they meet as a last resort. They have yet to meet the relevant officers or the Ministers to seek explanations.

"It would be a bit difficult if I were to handle everything myself," he said.

When told that Cuepacs was prepared to provide an alternative formula, the Prime Minister said the Government was willing to consider any if it could help the Government.

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"But we have to reject the formula if it imposes more burden and causes us problems. I am afraid that when a formula comes from Cuepacs, we are expected to agree with it.

"If we could not agree with it, the matter will be regarded as not resolved. This is the problem."

To another question, he said that the Government would not stop Cuepacs from holding talks with MTUC to discuss details of the Budget which affect the Government officers.

On his tour of the country which started in Perlis yesterday, he said these meetings were to enable him to explain to the Government officers on the economic slowdown.

"I also touched on the attitude of the officers and the politicians towards development programmes.

"I agree that there is a possibility of difference of ideas and opinions with regard to the present situation among the officers but at least now they understand the constraints faced by the Government."

Questions

Asked about the mood of the officers, the Prime Minister said that they were calm although they asked a lot of questions.

"I noted that they have learnt a lot from the meeting. Prior to the meeting, some of the officers did not really understand the situation," he said.

"They understood why we do not have money when we told them that we do not have money," he said.

On housing loans, he advised the officers to wait until the economy has stabilised before applying for them.