

Think again before it's too late, MTUC told

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — If the Malaysian Trades Union Congress wants to be used as a “tool for politicians,” then trade unions must set up an alternative apex organisation to represent them, **Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad** said.

The Prime Minister said it would not be possible for the organisation to succeed in its struggle to help workers if the MTUC was indeed a “political tool” of certain people.

This will be so because the MTUC would most certainly adopt an anti-Government attitude, he told reporters after recording his Hari Raya Puasa message to the nation at Angkasapuri here.

He said that if the MTUC regards itself as a political body, opposing the Government and co-operating with opposition parties, then they should end their role as the representative of the workers.

Dr Mahathir said: “This will make it difficult for the Government to give its co-operation to the MTUC.”

Dr Mahathir was asked to comment on last Monday's Workers Day Rally at the MTUC headquarters which was dominated by opposition politicians and Government critics.

Dr Mahathir said: “If the MTUC is already a tool of politicians, then there is a need to set up another organisation which really represents the workers and which have workers' interest as their priority.

Integrity

“So, before it is too late, it is better that they think about their role as the representative of the workers” he said.

“Workers must set up another body to represent them and to protect their interests,” he said.

In another statement, Encik Mohamed Abas, the secretary-general of the Congress of Unions of Employees in the Public and Civil Service, said the MTUC should reappraise its role as a national centre for trade unions to ensure the movement's integrity in the country.

He said the image of trade union leaders and the movement they represent should be upheld without the influence of others, particularly politicians.

But this does not mean that trade unionists could not develop good relations with others, including politicians, as long as the relationship promotes the interest of workers, he said.

But MTUC president Zainal Rampak defended the rally and claimed that “politics and trade unionism are inseparable”.

He said the MTUC was merely being “critical” of some Government policies and dismissed accusations of harbouring malice or “anti-Government feelings”.

“How can we not be critical when many labour issues have yet to be settled. The organised labour movement is going through a turbulent time now and many of our views on important issues have been set aside,” Encik Zainal told a Press confer.

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He pledged the MTUC will continue to be labour-oriented and will never directly or openly endorse politicians or a political party, despite the presence of a few politicians in its ranks.

“If some of our affiliates are not satisfied with the way the rally was conducted, they can raise it at the next general council meeting,” he said.

DAP deputy secretary-general Lee Lam Thye said in a statement that the party failed to understand the Government's reaction.