

Get rid of politicians, MTUC told

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today advised the Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) to rid itself of politicians in its ranks if it wanted to have a better relationship with the Government.

He said the unions can endorse politicians as long as there is no conflict of interest with trade union activities.

On the same note, the Prime Minister felt the MTUC must also be willing to support Government candidates who fight on a labour platform.

The Government, he said, disliked politicians who dabble in trade unionism and that was why the Government had refrained from being active in unionism so that the movement would be free from political influence.

"If the MTUC was to become a

political body and calls itself a labour party, then we don't need to give too much attention as it would be treated as an opposition party," he told reporters after attending Information Minister Datuk Mohamed Rahmat's Hari Raya open house.

The Prime Minister was expanding on his earlier statement that called on the MTUC to decide whether it wants to remain as a labour movement or a political party following its controversial Workers' Day rally which was highly politicised.

Criticisms that mounted included one from an affiliate, the National Union of Newspaper Workers, which threatened to form an alternative labour organisation if the MTUC maintained its political links.

Referring apparently to MTUC secretary-general Dr V.

David's position, he said if a politician was also a trade unionist, his political thinking and influence would certainly be instilled into the organisation.

Moreover, if a politician is from the opposition, the thinking and ideals would be against the Government.

"This is not healthy for trade unionism," he added.

Dr Mahathir said trade unions influenced by politics, particularly those from the opposition, would be in difficulties because the latter would burden workers with political problems.

On the MTUC's claims that the Prime Minister refused to meet the congress since assuming the Premiership, he said the congress had never once sought an appointment to meet him although he regularly met MTUC president Zainal Rampak.