

PM says MTUC can endorse politicians

THE Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) can endorse politicians as long as they are not leaders of the congress, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

The Prime Minister said these politicians must, however, restrict their ideology only to pertinent labour matters. He said to be fair, the MTUC must also be willing to support government candidates who fight on a labour platform.

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

"If the MTUC was to become a political body and calls itself a labour party, then we do not 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 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 apex labour organisation if the MTUC maintained its political links.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said trade unions influenced by politics, particularly those from the opposition, will face difficulties because the latter will burden workers with problems.

He advised the MTUC to rid itself of politicians in its ranks if it wanted to have a better relationship with the Government.

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 Ram-pak. — NST