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MAHATHIR-UNIONS  
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KUALA LUMPUR, JULY 5 (BERNAMA) -- DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TODAY ANY IMPROVEMENT IN THE ECONOMIC STATUS OF WORKERS NEED NOT NECESSARILY DEPEND ON THE STRENGTH OF UNIONS.

INSTEAD, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID, A STRONG ECONOMIC GROWTH AND SOUND INVESTMENT WERE THE MAIN FACTORS THAT ENSURE A HIGH SALARY FOR WORKERS.

CITING TAIWAN AND HONG KONG AS EXAMPLES, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID, THESE TWO COUNTRIES DO NOT HAVE UNIONS BUT THEIR WORKERS ENJOY VERY GOOD PAY COMPARED TO MALAYSIA.

SPEAKING TO REPORTERS AFTER MEETING LEADERS OF THE MALAYSIAN TRADES UNION CONGRESS (MTUC) HERE, HE SAID THAT IN TAIWAN AND HONG KONG, EMPLOYERS TREATED THEIR WORKERS WELL.

THE 17-MEMBER MTUC DELEGATION TO THE TWO-AND-A-HALF HOUR MEETING AT THE PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT WAS LED BY ITS PRESIDENT ZAINAL RAMPAK.

PRESENT WERE LABOUR MINISTER DATUK LIM AH LEK AND THE MINISTRY'S SECRETARY-GENERAL NIK MOHAMED AMIN NIK ABU BAKAR.--MORE  
2008MST 05 07 89

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MAHATHIR-UNIONS 2 KUALA LUMPUR

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS TIRELESSLY WORKING TOWARDS IMPROVING THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMY, INCLUDING ENCOURAGING FOREIGN INVESTMENT, BECAUSE A STRONG ECONOMY WOULD BENEFIT THE WORKERS.

IN THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THE ECONOMY, HE ASSURED THE WORKERS THAT THEIR INTEREST WOULD BE SAFEGUARDED.

THE PRIME MINISTER ALSO SPOKE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING INDUSTRIAL HARMONY IN THE COUNTRY TO BOOST INVESTMENT.

AT THE MEETING, THE MTUC HANDED OVER A MEMORANDUM CONTAINING SEVERAL PROPOSALS, INCLUDING THE NEED TO GIVE NATIONAL LABOUR ADVISORY COUNCIL (NLAC) THE POWER TO MAKE DECISIONS, TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF INDUSTRIAL COURTS, THE ELECTRONIC WORKERS THE RIGHT TO FORM A NATIONAL UNION AND TO RETURN JOINT NEGOTIATION RIGHTS TO PUBLIC SERVANTS.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID HE EXPLAINED TO THE DELEGATION THE GOVERNMENT'S STAND ON THESE ISSUES.--MORE  
2026MST 05 07 89

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MAHATHIR-UNIONS 3 KUALA LUMPUR

AS FOR THE PROPOSALS, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID, THE GOVERNMENT WAS WILLING TO CONSIDER THOSE WHICH WOULD BENEFIT THE GOVERNMENT, THE EMPLOYERS AND THE WORKERS.

AMONG THE SUGGESTIONS HE CONSIDERED APPROPRIATE WAS THE NEED TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF INDUSTRIAL COURTS TO OVERCOME THE BACKLOG OF CASES.

TO A QUESTION, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THERE WERE SEVERAL REASONS WHY THE PROPOSAL ON THE POSITION OF THE NLAC COULD NOT BE CONSIDERED.

THIS WAS BECAUSE THE COUNCIL MEMBERS, REPRESENTING THE GOVERNMENT, EMPLOYERS AND WORKERS, DO NOT FULLY UNDERSTAND THE COUNTRY'S PROBLEMS, HE SAID.

REGARDING THE ELECTRONIC WORKERS, HE SAID, THEY WERE NOT ALLOWED TO FORM A NATIONAL UNION BECAUSE THE INCOME OF THE FIRMS WERE DIFFERENT.--MORE  
2051MST 05 07 89

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MAHATHIR-UNIONS 4 KUALA LUMPUR

AS FOR THE NEGOTIATING RIGHTS OF GOVERNMENT SERVANTS, HE SAID, THE GOVERNMENT HAD SET UP THE PUBLIC SERVICES TRIBUNAL TO ENABLE GOVERNMENT STAFF TO SEEK RECTIFICATION TO SERVICE ANOMALIES.

ON THE INVOLVEMENT OF POLITICAL LEADERS IN THE MTUC, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THAT IF THEY WERE AT THE HELM, IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE CONGRESS WAS TRULY WORKING TOWARDS SAFEGUARDING WORKERS' RIGHTS OR THEIR OWN POLITICAL INTEREST.

+FOR AS LONG AS THE MTUC IS LED BY POLITICAL FIGURES, THE GOVERNMENT MUST NOT BE BLAMED IF IT CONSIDERS THE CONGRESS A POLITICAL PARTY,+ HE SAID.

QUOTING THE EXAMPLE OF THE GENERALISED SYSTEM OF PREFERENCES (GSP) ISSUE WHICH INVOLVED MTUC SECRETARY-GENERAL AND PUCHONG MP V. DAVID, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID HE COULD NOT ASCERTAIN WHETHER ENCIK DAVID'S ACTION WAS INFLUENCED BY HIS POLITICAL OR UNION STRUGGLE.

HE SAID HE TOLD THE MTUC THAT IT WAS WRONG IF A UNION LEADER WERE TO ACT IN A MANNER WHICH COULD BRING ABOUT A NEGATIVE EFFECT ON THE COUNTRY.

APART FROM ENCIK DAVID, THE OTHER DAP LEADER IN THE MTUC IS AHMAD NOR. ENCIK AHMAD IS DAP'S VICE-CHAIRMAN AND MTUC'S DEPUTY PRESIDENT.--MORE  
2122MST 05 07 89

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MAHATHIR-UNIONS 5 KUALA LUMPUR

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID HE WAS GENERALLY SATISFIED WITH TODAY'S MEETING WHICH ENABLED HIM TO EXPLAIN THE GOVERNMENT'S VIEWS AND ITS STAND ON LABOUR ISSUES.

HE WAS ALSO HAPPY THAT ONE OF THE DELEGATION MEMBERS PRAISED THE GOVERNMENT'S PRIVATISATION POLICY WHICH HAD BENEFITTED WORKERS.

ENCIK ZAINAL RAMPAK LATER SAID HE TOO WAS SATISFIED WITH THE MEETING BUT DECLINED TO ELABORATE.

THIS WAS THE FIRST MEETING BETWEEN THE MTUC AND DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SINCE HE BECAME PRIME MINISTER IN 1981. --BERNAMA  
2132MST 05 07 89