

Rethink your role, PM tells unions

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. —
Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir
Mohamad called on trade
unions today to be more
than just champions of
workers' rights.

"I feel unions have a bigger role to play in helping the country's economy to grow by spurring workers to be more productive," the Prime Minister said.

Dr Mahathir said if productivity increased, the country's revenue would also increase and workers could enjoy better wages.

He said it was "time for radical thinking."

"I know they have to think of the workers' welfare but this can be done in other ways," he said.

He said workers who got higher pay after holding strikes to back their demands failed to realise that their benefits were only short-term ones.

This was because they would have to take pay cuts if their companies suffered losses later on.

"But they will enjoy long-term benefits if they work hard to help the country grow rapidly," he said.

Speaking to reporters after opening Cuepacs' triennial

convention here, Dr Mahathir said workers in newly-industrialised countries like Singapore, South Korea, Hong Kong and Taiwan now enjoyed good salaries when at one time their workers earned less than Malaysians.

He said in Singapore, industrial activity was growing so fast that the country was facing a worker shortage until companies there paid their workers high wages to keep them and attract new ones.

He added that employers should also, on their part, provide incentives and recreational facilities to encourage productivity.

On government servants' claims for increased allowance, he said the Government had to look at its financial standing and the requirements of the other sectors before it could entertain the claims.

The Prime Minister said development expenditure must also be allocated to the farming and fisheries sectors.

He, however, said the Government would consider Cuepacs' and the National Joint Councils' claims

for increased civil service allowance submitted since 1985.

In his speech earlier, Dr Mahathir said leaders of Western trade unions had ulterior motives in seeking close ties with their counterparts in developing countries.

"They instigate our unionists to create industrial unrest in the name of protecting workers' rights.

"But they are doing this because they want our country's economy to be affected so that our exports cannot compete favourably with their own products.

"If those unionists really care for our workers' welfare, they should help our country's economy to grow by finding new markets for our products in their countries," he said.

Earlier this morning, when opening an orientation course for staff of the Agriculture Ministry, the Prime Minister urged farmers and fishermen to be prepared to change their ways if they wanted to improve their lives.

"They should now work towards mass consumption," he said.