

Malaysia criticises ILO over forced labour claims

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. — Malaysia has withdrawn its support for the International Labour Organisation's Convention 105 in protest against the world labour body's stand that a number of the country's laws are inconsistent with the convention.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysia now joined the ranks of such developed countries as the United States in not recognising the convention.

Speaking to newsmen after officiating the groundbreaking ceremony for the National Heart Centre, the Prime Minister said the ILO was constantly con-

demning Malaysia, including its use of prisoners to carry out specified work.

The convention, adopted by the ILO in 1957 and ratified by Malaysia in 1958, seeks to secure the immediate and complete abolition of forced or compulsory labour. The convention came into force in 1959.

Dr Mahathir explained that prisoners were often used to perform specified work as part of their punishment and rehabilitation.

He said the Government could not pay the normal salary to them because they were prisoners.

"Even this has become a problem ... supposedly we are using forced labour ...

there are numerous accusations," he said when asked by newsmen to comment on reports that Malaysia had withdrawn its support for the convention.

Dr Mahathir said the ILO did not take a serious view of the problems faced by developing countries, noting that the body only knew how to condemn.

"It appears as though they are not glad over the stable and good industrial relations in this country. They would prefer if industrial relations were chaotic because the development of the country would then be affected."

On whether Malaysia would make a formal pro-

test over the ILO's accusations, Dr Mahathir said there was no necessity because Malaysia had withdrawn from the convention.

With Malaysia's withdrawal, the number of signatory countries to the convention is 101. Fifty countries, including the US and the USSR, never ratified the convention.

Singapore was the first country to withdraw its recognition after having ratified the convention in 1965.

The ILO, over the years, had come down hard on Malaysia for what it claimed to be "inconsistencies" of 19 Malaysian laws, including the Internal Security Act 1960.