

'Higher salaries only through increased productivity'

Nation's workers earn PM's praise

NSunT 15 JUL 1990

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KULIM, Sat. — The Prime Minister thanked Malaysian workers for their contribution to the economy and advised them to be good workers for their own sake and that of the country.

He advised them not to resort to industrial action to achieve their objectives.

He told a gathering of more than 5,000 workers from 22 factories in the Kulim industrial estate today that the best way of earning higher salaries was to improve their productivity.

He said only through productivity could they demand higher salaries without affecting the competitiveness of the products they manufacture.

Earlier, a representative of the workers pledged their support for the Government's investment policy. A worker then read a pledge to continue to improve their productivity.

The Prime Minister was earlier received with warm enthusiasm by the workers. He and his wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, spent nearly 20 minutes exchanging greetings with a long line of workers.

The Prime Minister said the Government's interest in inviting foreign investors to the country was not so much to tax them but to create employment.

In fact, he said, the Government was not getting much by way of taxation because these companies were given pioneer status and other tax-free incentives.

He reminded the workers that unreasonable demands would lead to reduced competitiveness of their industries and would eventually drive away investors.

He told the workers that certain union leaders under the guise of protecting the workers were in fact doing considerable harm to their well-being.

They went to the extent of undermining the market for Malaysian products in the world, particularly in the United States.

In an obvious reference to the call by union leaders for the US Government to withdraw GSP privileges to Malaysia, Dr Mahathir said these people were being made use of by American trade unionists and workers.

He asked the workers where these union leaders were when they (the workers) were unemployed.

He said some union leaders started showing interest in the workers only when they (the workers) were employed.

These union leaders were motivated by personal gain upon seeing the kind of perks they could enjoy by leading large unions.

Dr Mahathir said these union leaders would have considerable financial backing if they succeeded in organising the 130,000 electronics industry workers in a national union, Dr Mahathir said.

That is why, he added, these union leaders vehemently opposed the formation of in-house unions for the electronics industry.

He said the workers might not earn very much

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but this was much better than being unemployed.

In fact, the Prime Minister said, he was aware that many workers were supporting their parents in the villages.

Acknowledging their skills, the Prime Minister said Malaysian workers could now produce high quality products that were accepted in a most developed nation.

He said the Government had all along believed that given the chance, the Malaysian workers could do as well, if not better, than workers in developed countries.

That was why the Government had worked hard and was working even harder to get more foreign investors to come to this country.

He said he was greatly encouraged that Malaysian workers had successfully absorbed and used imported technology to the country's advantage.