

# MLO has right to be in -council, says PM

ALOR STAR, Fri. — The Malaysian Labour Organisation (MLO) has a right to be represented in the National Labour Advisory Council! Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said all the MLO had to do was to prove it had the backing of workers.

He said it was left to the workers to decide whether they wanted the MLO to represent them in the council.

"We will have to consider the organisation's request for membership in the council if it has the necessary support from workers.

"The only criterion (for inclusion in the council) is whether the MLO gets the support of the workers," he said at the Sultan Abdul Halim airport in Kepala Batas before returning to

Kuala Lumpur this evening after a two-day visit to Kedah.

On the objections of the MTUC and Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) over the MLO inclusion, Dr Mahathir said: "It is not the right of the MTUC to agree or disagree . . . the question is whether the MLO gets the support of the workforce.

"If many back the MLO, one cannot claim that only the MTUC reserves the exclusive right (to sit in the council). The same goes for the MEF . . . it cannot say that it does not want to have relations with other parties, it has no right, only the workers can decide."

Dr Mahathir was commenting on statements by MTUC deputy secretary-general G. Rajasekaran and MEF executive director M. Zain Majid yesterday

that the MLO should not be included in the council, the Industrial Court panel and other similar tripartite bodies.

Both groups said that only organisations "most representative" of workers should be allowed in, claiming that this principle was in accordance to ILO principles.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir inspected the problem-plagued but near complete Universiti Utara Malaysia campus in Sintok.

The campus was to have been ready by June 15 in time for the university's new academic year start-

ing on July 14, but slow work by contractors forced the admission date to be postponed twice.

The 3,500 students will now only report on Sept 15 and Sept 22.

Dr Mahathir, who toured the campus site with Mentri Besar Datuk Seri Osman Aroff and Vice-Chancellor Datuk Dr Othman Yeop Abdullah, said he had expected the delay in completion "because it is a massive project."

"But we have developed the campus in a record 20 months, with many buildings like lecture halls and hostels already put up.

But our target to meet the deadline and keep the original intake date has still not been successful" he said after his tour.

Dr Mahathir said he was astounded by the "mammoth" cost of the project. "I was told by the VC that the actual cost comes up to an average of \$6,500 per student."

The Prime Minister hoped that UUM students would appreciate the problems the Government faced to build the university, and that they would "repay" the people and country by being useful to society after they graduated.