

Dr M allays RUM's privatisation fears

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — The Government guarantees that there would be better salaries and superior terms and conditions of service for employees in privatised Government agencies, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"There will be no exploitation as alternatives would be conceived to overcome low wages when the time 'comes,' he said when opening the Railwaymen's Union of Malaya (RUM) triennial delegates' conference.

He was apparently allaying the worries of the RUM which had repeatedly said that the impending privatisation of Malayan Railway (KTM) should not be at the expense of workers.

Talking at length on privatisation, Dr Mahathir said ironically some workers had complained that the Government was too slow in carrying out the exercise as evident in a letter he received recently.

The complaint, he said, stemmed from the fact that workers in privatised agencies like the Klang Container Terminal, Airrod, Malaysia Airlines and the Malaysian International Shipping Corporation were getting higher salaries, bonuses and the opportunity to buy shares.

"It would appear that the workers affected are impatient to enjoy the benefits and to own shares. It will happen in good time, just as long as they do not sell the shares for quick gains," he said.

On KTM's impending privatisation, Dr Mahathir said while it was not ex-

pected to earn profits based on its net asset value, the Government was sure that KTM could prosper through its profit-earning potential.

Citing the example of Telekom Malaysia, he said the company could never make profits based on its \$10 billion worth of assets and, similarly, KTM would not be pressured.

"That was why the Government evaluated that Telekom Malaysia profits should be based on its pro-

fit-earning potential ... it should be reasonable but not necessarily real," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the British Government evaluated the same kind of profits from privatised agencies like British Airways, the British Airport Authority, National Electricity Board and water supply authority.

He also cited the profitability and popularity of the Japanese National Railway after it was privatised.

He said KTM would soon have to compete with other modes of transportation for passengers but expressed confidence that with better management and proper training, the railway could attain fame like MAS' golden service.

He also reminded employees in agencies about to be privatised, not to

expect standardised salaries because different agencies had different capacities, unlike the Government which was a single employer;

● make demands just to match salaries and benefits of counterparts from other privatised agencies as this would cause problems; and,

● make immediate demands for higher salaries but to improve productivity and efficiency as pay hikes would eventually be obtained once profits were recorded

The Prime Minister added that there should be better relations and co-operation between employers and workers.