

# PM warns workers against union leaders who use them

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KOTA BARU, Fri. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad reminded workers today of the risks they face if labour unions did not act properly in defending their rights.

Adopting a confrontational attitude towards employers or Government just to prove the strength of the union leadership would be detrimental to everyone's interest, the Prime Minister said.

"A union can be considered as a body to check against possible suppression of workers, and any measure taken to prevent this can be done through discussion," he told Groups C and D Muslim government employees at a meeting at the Balai Islam here.

Dr Mahathir said any claim by the workers should be made through discussion to achieve consensus, and not by threatening to strike.

Stressing the need for moderation in whatever they did, he quoted the Malay adage *Kalau menarik benang dalam tepung, biarlah benang itu tak putus dan tepung pula tak berkecai* (If we draw thread through dough, don't snap the thread and crumble the dough).

He advised workers not to be easily influenced by certain union leaders who he said were using them to further their own political ambitions.

These leaders, supposedly popular for their aggressive manner in pursu-

ing workers' rights, did not think of the effects their claims would have on the national economy and political stability, he said.

"Such leaders are usually those who did not have the opportunity to succeed in politics and they use the union as a platform to become more popular," he added.

Dr Mahathir said workers should be sensitive to the country's economic situation when asking for higher salaries and the like.

He gave an assurance that the Government would meet workers' claims according to its capability. He reminded them not to be too quick to resort to threats of strike

action to challenge the Government.

"We can see for ourselves the effects of strikes on a developed country like Britain and the economies of several countries which have bowed to unreasonable pay claims," he said.

Dr Mahathir said it would be pointless for the Government to meet claims for pay rises if this could lead to inflation, increase the country's debts and lower the people's purchasing power.

The country had managed its finances well and maintained the inflation rate at two per cent per annum, he said.

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## Rulers above politics: Mahathir

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"We have been labelled a model country by the World Bank because of orderly repayment of our debts," he explained.

Dr Mahathir urged workers to understand the democratic system and not act in any way that could negate their own rights.

He said that the system of parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy practised in the country had served it well and should be preserved.

He said Rulers were above politics and should not be dragged into or be involved in politicking.

"Under our Constitution, the role of the Rulers is separate from that of the elected Government and Parliament.

"We have a dual system of constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy. Politics is the right of the masses while the Rulers are heads of the states," he added.

Dr Mahathir also said that no one wanted to be led by a group which could not manage the country's finances properly or which could compromise its integrity by denying the people their freedom of expression.

He cited an example of how Kedah suffered such a fate in 1911 when it was handed over to English economic administrators because of debts that could not be repaid to Siam.

The people then, who were not asked for their views, had to shoulder the burden of a \$5 million

loan taken to finance the weddings of five royal family members, he said.

Menteri Besar Tan Sri Haji Mohamed Yaacob said Kelantan could not be economically viable without Federal Government help and co-operation.

With an annual revenue of \$58 million, the Government was not able to even pay its staff, he said.

"Often, the Federal Government's allocation of funds for building infrastructure facilities was used to pay the salaries of state government staff," he added.

The people should thus avoid the possibility of a change in the state government in the next general election, he said.

"We need more time to better the position of Kelantan," he said.