

'Economic prosperity can enhance living standards'

P.M.: Industrial peace vital

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — Laws and trade unions by themselves cannot enhance the standard of living of the people, but economic prosperity can, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir, Mohamad said.

At the same time, the nation's economy would not grow if there is no peace, Dr Mahathir said in his Workers' Day message released here today.

Furthermore, economic growth will not be possible if there is no industrial peace which will lead to reduced productivity, he said.

In this situation, investors will refuse to invest their money, resulting in higher unemployment. Employers could then get their workers easily without having to raise wages, the Prime Minister said.

Dr Mahathir drew the nation's attention to the situation facing workers in overpopulated countries where wages are low. Their wages become lower if industrial peace is absent and their productivity is also adversely affected.

including Malaysia, he added.

In view of the auspicious day, Dr Mahathir urged workers to give deep thought to the factors that would determine their wages and standard of living.

Advising workers to avoid action which could be detrimental to their well-being, the Prime Minister called for vigilant and disciplined efforts so that the objective of turning Malaysia into a developed nation by 2020 would be achieved.

"(By then) workers will enjoy benefits to commensurate with the achievement," he added.

Deputy Prime Minister Ghafar Baba in his message, said trade unions could complement the Government's effort to create job opportunities for about one million school leavers in the next five years by helping to attract investors into the country.

They could do this by telling investors that Malaysia had an enduring industrial peace which should help

Conversely, wages will multiply for workers in highly-populated but peaceful countries that thrive on high productivity, he added.

The Prime Minister said that the possibility of oppression of Malaysian workers as seen in the West during the industrial revolution or during the era of colonialism did not exist.

"With powers vested in trade unions and Government enforcement of labour laws, workers' rights are preserved," Dr Mahathir said.

In Malaysia, workers are free to form trade unions to protect and promote their interest.

He said there was no denial of the good treatment workers got because trade unions had a certain way to ensure that their claims received considerate attention from their management.

There were also laws designed to protect workers's rights all over the world,

promote the growth of business and industry in the long run, the Deputy Prime Minister said.

Encik Ghafar said trade unions' efforts to attract as many investors as possible would be the best gift they could give to their children when they leave school and look for jobs.

He said the unions must also be able to convince investors that Malaysia was an excellent place to invest in.

He said the Government would do its part by ensuring that foreign investors paid workers decent wages and fulfilled all statutory requirements.

"As much as we want foreign investors, we will never allow them to exploit our workers," he told reporters after holding talks with Venezuelan Foreign Minister Dr Armando Duran.

On the role of employers, he said they must look after the welfare of their workers and recognise them as their best resources.