

A BETTER LIFE FOR WORKERS

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — Malaysians can look forward to a more comfortable life, similar to that enjoyed by those in developed nations, by the year 2020.

The Prime Minister said today he believed that workers would, by then, have a better life, own a proper home, a car, and household items which only the middle-class could afford now, and to take a holiday.

This, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said, was not merely a dream as there were countries in the Far East which had become developed within 30 years.

"We have only to emulate the approaches made by these countries and God willing, we will succeed," he said when addressing a Workers' Day gathering at Stadium Negara.

He said to achieve that status in life, the salaries of workers must not only be increased but the cost of living must also not rise along with the income.

He said no matter what was done, it was the workers' efforts which determined better productivity.

"Workers must work harder, with greater orderliness and discipline," Dr Mahathir said.

He said trade unions should review their role and questioned whether this meant merely to press for higher salaries through industrial action.

"Why can't trade unions help workers get higher salaries through helping them to step up productivity?"

Dr Mahathir warned that trade unions in developed nations wanted to be in close relationship with their counterparts in developing countries with the sole in-

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tion of negating the competitiveness of their goods against those of their own countries.

"This is done by instigating workers in developing countries to make excessive demands and to disrupt production through strikes and other industrial actions," he added.

Dr Mahathir said unfortunately trade unions lured by the hospitality shown by trade unionists in developed nations were prepared to set aside national interests.

"The appointments of trade unionists to head international federations of unions are aimed at influencing the economic climate of developing countries. It is not an honour," he added.

He also warned employers against taking advantage of the prevailing industrial peace to exploit workers by not giving them reasonable wages.

"Here, the responsibility of the Government is very important. The Government does not wish to see workers being paid low wages," he said, adding that their salaries must commensurate with productivity.

Dr Mahathir said the expenditure of workers, who made up a large part of society, played a major role in economic growth.

The Government, he added, spent about \$1.6 billion and \$6.4 billion annually to pay the salaries of its senior officers and staff respectively.

"The higher their income, the more they will spend and the greater will be the economic activity and growth," he added.

It was for this reason that the Government wanted workers' salaries to increase so long as they did not cause a loss to the employers or stop employers from re-investing part of their profits in their ventures.

He said Malaysia practised a free and open market system where the interests of workers were protected.

The Government could not, however, ignore the rights of investors who required protection from excessive and irresponsible actions of workers, unions or political parties wanting to use workers.

Earlier, Human Resources Minister Datuk Lim Ah Lek described the gathering as historical as it was the first time the Government had organised it with the co-operation of employers and employees.

He said the gathering was aimed at promoting the spirit of tripartism among the Government, employers and workers.