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SHAH ALAM, Aug 12 (Bernama) - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today suggested that blue-collar workers be paid better wages to dispel the negative notion attached to this vocation.

He said there was no better way to get rid of this misconception than to pay skilled workers higher than their white-collar counterparts.

+If this appreciation is proven, there will be more blue-collar workers and skills will be enhanced,+ he said at the presentation of the +Golden Hand+ award for the 1991 Malaysian Skills Contest here today.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said whether Malaysia could achieve its objective of becoming an industrialised country depended very much on its ability to create enough skilled workers in the various fields.

As such, the negative view attached to blue-collar work should be dispelled, he added.

He said parents and youths should be aware of the major contributions that blue-collar workers could make towards the country's economic development.

+Our efforts to produce more semi-skilled and skilled workers may be more successful if we can change society's attitude and views on blue-collar work,+ he added. -- more

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The Prime Minister said **1.1-w management, however, should be accorded greater appreciation than the blue-collar sector.**

Speaking to reporters later, he said management work was important because without an efficient management, work could not proceed smoothly.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the government was studying the proposal to better reward blue-collar workers before the Cabinet made a decision on the matter.

The proposal would cover both the public and private sectors.

+We feel it is good to give recognition to the trained hands. Their pay should be the same if not more than degree holders,+ he added.

The Prime Minister said in this era of technology, skilled work was so valuable, +perhaps even more valuable than works of writing.+ -- more

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To overcome the problem of labour shortage in the industrial sector, local industries should use more machines and modern technology, he added.

In his speech, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir also said the private sector should co-operate with the government in conducting training to improve workers' skills.

Private sector co-operation was vital to ensure that the type of training conducted was relevant to the country's industrial needs, he said.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said a skilled workforce was important because foreign investors might be put off by a lack of skilled workers.

The Prime Minister said the government was serious in its efforts on human resource development, including technical expertise.

Under the Sixth Malaysia Plan (SMP), the government would upgrade several vocational schools to polytechnics in line with its policy to produce more skilled workers, he said.

The government has also approved \$8,501 million under the SMP for educational and training programmes.-- Bernama