

PM: Investment drive will continue

By K.P. Waran

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — The Government will continue to encourage investments until the number of jobs created exceeds the number of workers, the Prime Minister said today.

He said the people would benefit most from this as wages would increase when firms began to compete for workers.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said that for the country to benefit the workers must improve their productivity in proportion to the increase in wages offered by the employers.

Otherwise, he said local goods and services would not be able to compete in the market and it would not be profitable for the companies.

"Without profits, the industries will fail and there

will be unemployment again," he said at the opening of the MAS Employees Union's 12th annual meeting.

Also present at the ceremony were MAS managing director Tan Sri Abdul Aziz Abdul Rahman, MAS chairman Tan Sri Zain Azraai, union president Haji Jumaat Yusof and deputy president Encik Alias Aziz.

He said Malaysians had the capability and capacity to work like the Japanese and workers in Western countries and this had been proven time and again.

He said the investment benefits provided by the Government were not confined to monetary incentives and infrastructure but also political stability and industrial peace.

"In view of this, workers should not readily resort to industrial action as in the

long run this will result in losses for the workers. We have seen how countries with industrial peace developed quickly.

"However, in countries where workers go on long strikes following instigation by jealous quarters from the West, there have been escalating costs which have resulted in investors looking for alternative countries to invest. This has brought about high unemployment," he said.

Dr Mahathir said this did not mean that workers should not be paid reasonable wages and added that workers should be treated well and fairly especially if their services result in the success of the ventures.

"Wage claims should be made through consultations and if this fails it should be resolved through arbitration.

"Threats and tests of strength are primitive methods similar to allowing two people to have a punch-out as a way to let them solve their problems or like allowing two countries to go to war," he said.

He said the Government had enacted laws to protect workers from being exploited by employers and the Government had to view seriously the problems of workers.

He said being fair to workers did not necessarily mean taking the side of workers as the Government had to also look after the interests of employers and investors so that they could continue to provide employment.

The Prime Minister said the Government encouraged the establishment of in-house unions such as the Malaysia Airline System Employees Union since the

achievements of companies in the same trade differed.

"Unions based on industries emphasise uniform salary scales without taking into consideration the paying capacity of the firms, which results in some firms having to close shop and workers being unemployed.

"If workers are patient and make efforts to upgrade productivity and expand the business, workers can benefit from increases in wages and also from bonus payments," he said.

He said it was evident that many Malaysian trade union leaders placed more importance on their political positions and their parties than on the welfare of workers.

He said they were even willing to expose the electronic workers to unemployment.