

Threats won't work, PM tells Tenaga officers

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KUALA LUMPUR: Employees in privatised government departments should be grateful and not resort to threats, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said on Tuesday.

He said these employees enjoyed more benefits compared to those working in departments and, therefore, they should not make excessive demands.

"Many departments, which have been shortlisted for privatisation, have requested that the exercise be expedited," the Prime Minister said.

"This is because the employees know they will benefit from privatisation. However the senior officers of Tenaga Nasional do not seem to be grateful."

The Prime Minister was commenting on the picket staged by Tenaga Nasional Senior Officers Association against the management's decision to give them a 1.5-month bonus and half month gratia.

Dr Mahathir said the Government only considered demands that were reasonable and fair.

"If we give in now, there will be more demands later followed by pickets and beatings (of effigies)," he said.

"The Government promised that employees will not lose out in the privatisation exercise. In this case, the employees even gained much more."

He described the action by the Tenaga officers as "strange" because it was not the normal practice of company executives and was a threat to the country's development.

"Executives cannot issue threats of industrial action. Any grouse should be discussed. It is obvious the association does not know their rights," he said.

"I am worried because electricity supply is an essential service and should not be taken lightly. If such threats are carried out, it would hinder development and everybody would lose out including Tenaga workers."

The Prime Minister said possible action would be taken against the officers if the law provided for it.