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UNION LEADERS ARE ONLY SEEKING PERSONAL COMFORT, SAYS PM

Mahathir-labour

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MELAXA April 15 (Bernama) -- Local union leaders bent on getting Malaysia suspended from the International Labour Organisation (ILO) are only using their position for the pursuits of greater personal comfort, the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Their motive for wanting to be union leaders was to make the most of members' subscriptions, he said.

In the context of the country's electronics industry, he said a monthly subscription of \$1 for instance, would mean a monthly income of \$120,000 for the union as there were now about 120,000 workers in that sector, he said.

Just because they want the \$120,000...they would rather see the country expelled, he said referring to a news report today that local unionists wanted Malaysia suspended from ILO activities until the government recognised certain conventions relating to freedom of association for workers in the electronics industry.

Dr Mahathir said this when opening Graha Makmur, the Melaka Municipal Council complex at Air, Keroh here.

The report said Europe's most influential labour organisation, the International Metal Workers' Federation was expected to recommend that Malaysia be suspended from taking part in the ILO conferences.-- more

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Dr Mahathir said trade union leaders who instigated workers to resort to strikes and other forms of industrial action did not at all strive to create job opportunities in the country.

On the contrary, when jobs were available and workers were enlisted, they projected themselves as union leaders and workers' champions to the extend of even urging the ILO to remove Malaysia from its membership.

The Prime Minister said the government created job opportunities as a result of trade and investment missions abroad besides providing incentives to investors.

He envisaged greater flow of foreign investments to the country because of investors confidence in the country's stability and so long as the workers maintained industrial peace so as not to change the favourable investment climate.

Dr Mahathir said as job opportunities increased but labour supply decreased, employers would increase wages to attract workers to their factories.-- more

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Increased wages would lead to the government providing more facilities and greater living comforts as a result of more revenue earned from taxation, the Prime Minister said.

Dr Mahathir said as it was facing labour shortage, Malaysia had to recruit about 7,000 foreign workers now.

He said Malaysia was not experiencing unemployment as according to a United Nations' definition, a four per cent unemployment rate is not regarded as unemployment since in any society there were people who refused to work.

He said the number of Malaysian immigrant workers was also small.

At the function, Melaka Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Tamby Chik accorded the +Most Honourable Citizen+ award to Dr Mahathir for his able leadership which brought about international recognition for Malaysia.

Dr Mahathir inspected a guard of honour mounted by 30 Melaka Municipal Council workers and launched a book entitled +Melaka- The Historic City Of Malaysia .+ .

The 172-page book which deals with Melaka's history and progress, is published by the Malaysian Mining Corporation Berhad.

Also present were Housing and Local Government Minister Dr Ting Chew Peh, the Prime Minister's wife Datuk Seri Datin Paduka Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali and wife of the chief minister Puan Sri Hajah Zabedah Abdullah.

The +Graha Makmur+ complex costs about \$20 million and its architecture incorporated designs of palaces of the Melaka Sultanate.-- Bernama

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