

'Opportunist' leaders

By AHIRUDIN ATTAN

16 APR 1992

LOCAL trade union leaders who want Malaysia out of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), supposedly because the Government disallows industry-wide union for electronics workers, do it for the money, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

Describing these leaders as "opportunists", the Prime Minister said they are motivated by the money-generating potential of an industry-wide union in the electronics sector.

Dr Mahathir said: "There are some 120,000 workers in electronics firms country-wide. With a monthly membership fee of \$1 for each worker, whoever controls the industry-wide electronics union will earn \$120,000 a month for purposes only they know.

"And because they must have this amount (of money), they are willing to put the interest of the nation in jeopardy.

"This is the quality of

some of our union leaders."

Dr Mahathir said this in his speech at the official opening of the Malacca Municipal building. The \$21 million, five-storey building combines various architectural features ranging from Minangkabau to Portuguese.

"They have never helped in providing employment. But when the Government provides jobs for the workers, they immediately take interest," he said.

Fortunately, the workers are not easily taken in by trade union leaders who threaten to undermine the country's investment climate which have also benefited them.

"Every worker in this country acknowledges that the initiatives to provide jobs come from the Government, through the various trade missions and incentives given ... and that there are people out there who will always want to take advantage," he added.

Some unionists are trying to get the International Metal Workers Federation (IMF) to use its influence to suspend Malaysia from future International Labour Organisation (ILO) conferences.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir said the fact that Malaysia has achieved full employment shows that existing policies have succeeded in giving the benefits of development to the people. In fact, Malaysia is providing employment for over 700,000 foreign workers, he added.

The Prime Minister, who was accompanied by wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Ali, was later presented with the *Warga Terhormat Melaka Bandar Bersejarah* by Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Thamby Chik.

Rahim, in his address, said Dr Mahathir was given the award for his contributions to the nation and, particularly, for his involvement in the development of Malacca.