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MALAYSIA'S INDUSTRIALISATION PROGRAMME AN OVERWHELMING SUCCESS, SAYS PM

Mahathir-industries

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KULIM, Sept 10, (Bernama) -- Malaysia's industrialisation programme is so successful that the country now faces a shortage of workers, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said the problem was experienced not only in the Klang Valley but also in other parts of the country such as in Johor and Pulau Pinang.

As a means of overcoming the problem, the government was now forced to opt for capital-intensive high-technology industries rather than labour-intensive industries, he said at the ground-breaking ceremony for the Kulim High Technology Industrial Park, here.

He said capital-intensive high-technology industries did not require a large number of workers but only highly skilled workers.

Since these industries only required few workers, they could provide better remuneration to them, he added. -- more

▼10/09/21-01MST

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He said the setting up of the Kulim industrial park was a move in that direction.

Dr Mahathir advised workers against disputing the lower pay they received compared to workers in developed countries because low labour cost was a comparative advantage for the country which attracted foreign investment.

Malaysia's cost of labour was only a fifth or a tenth of that of developed countries, he said.

He said the workers should be thankful that although they earned lower wages than their counterparts in the developed countries, their salaries were much better than those of workers in neighbouring countries with the exception of Singapore.

Workers in the country were not exploited through the payment of low wages, he added. -- more

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Dr Mahathir said workers of the Industri Pesawat Terbang Nusantara (IPTN) in Indonesia, a factory he visited recently, were highly skilled but earned low wages.

He said the company, which manufactured planes and helicopters, had highly skilled workers so much so that it received orders for aircraft parts from aircraft manufacturers in the United States and Spain.

The aircraft parts were previously manufactured in Japan but the manufacturers turned to Indonesia owing to low cost, he said.

+We cannot certainly compete with Indonesia because it has not only low cost of labour but also highly skilled labour,+ he said.

+Therefore, if we demand wages similar to those in developed countries, foreign investors will not want to invest in Malaysia but would go to Indonesia,+ he added. -- more

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He said that demanding higher wages would lead to more people becoming jobless and as such the only option for the workers would be to choose between moderate pay and no pay at all and not between low pay and high pay.

It was for this reason that the government refused to allow the setting up of a national union for some 150,000 electronic workers in the country, he said, adding that such a union could be used by individuals as a platform to gain popularity by constantly demanding for more pay for the workers.

+The more aggressive of the individuals will be elected the leader,+ he said, adding that such individuals would not care about the fate of the jobless.

He said the government on the other hand had the interest of the jobless at heart.

Dr Mahathir said those who were now working obtained employment as a result of government efforts to woo investors to the country. -- more

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He said that apart from low cost of labour, Malaysia's other comparative advantages such as the ability of workers to master skills of the developed countries should be fully utilised to step up industrialisation.

The park, on a 1,448-hectare site, would have a high-technology industry zone, a research and development centre, a university, a polytechnic, a training and skills centre, and housing and recreational facilities. -- Bernama