

Confrontation

By Jeffrey Ramayah

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. — The Government will always be fair in dealing with any conflict between employers and employees, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

While the Government would protect the workers' interests and ensure that employers were fair to them, the Government was also responsible in ensuring that workers respect the interest of the employers.

"Employers will not be able to make profits without workers and similarly workers will not get jobs without employers," he said in his message in conjunction with Workers' Day.

Dr Mahathir said confrontation was not part of the Malaysian culture or approach in solving problems and added that it would only worsen the situation.

and understanding between employers, workers and the Government.

"This co-operation and understanding has contributed to industrial peace which has enabled the Government to focus not only on developing the economy for the benefit of the people but also in attracting foreign investments to our country.

"Hence, in the interest of our workers and the future of our country, it is important that this co-operation and understanding be maintained and enhanced," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysian workers should realise that for Malaysia to develop and grow, industrial peace and harmony must prevail.

Industrial conflicts, he said, would threaten Malaysia's competitiveness and if this happened, it was the workers and the nation which would lose.

"The best way to solve problems between employers and workers is through negotiation, with both sides willing to give and take," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Workers' Day was extremely meaningful to all workers in the country, regardless of whether they worked in the public or the private sector.

The fact that it was being officially celebrated was an indication that workers' contribution to the country was recognised by the country and the people.

He said workers in Malaysia were among the luckiest in the world and they should therefore be grateful because the country did not face the problem of unemployment.

"Any citizen entering the labour market can easily get a job if he or she is not too choosy and in addition, Malaysian workers' standard of living is relatively higher than that of workers in other developing countries.

"The low inflation rate has not reduced their purchasing power and because of this, many foreign workers rush to work in Malaysia," he said.

This situation, he said, existed because in general, there was close co-operation

"We should learn from the experiences of a number of developed countries where as a result of irresponsible industrial actions by their workers, their cost of production has increased.

"Consequently, not only their products failed to compete but their economic performance has also been affected.

"Unemployment has increased to 20 per cent and many of their citizens have become homeless.

"When this happens, it is difficult for these countries to bring about a recovery of their economy.

"It is for this reason that we need to be cautious and take into account public interest before taking any industrial action," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysians had about 27 years to achieve developed nation status and added that this objective would only be achieved if workers played their part effectively.

In addition to ensuring that the investment environment was always good, workers must always work towards improving productivity and efficiency so that Malaysian products would

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Message for workers

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continue to remain competitive in the international market.

"In conjunction with Workers' Day, I wish all workers a Happy Workers' Day.

"Let us heighten our determination and together strive and work towards becoming a fully developed society which is highly respected," he said.