

# NEGOTIATE, DON'T CONFRONT

By ROHAIZAD A. RAHIM

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Workers should not adopt a confrontational attitude when trying to solve problems with their employers, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

In his Workers' Day message, the Prime Minister said confrontation would only worsen the situation and the best way to overcome problems was through negotiations.

"Confrontation is not a part of our culture nor is it the best way to solve any problem.

"While the Government will protect workers' interests and ensure that they receive fair treatment

from their employers, the Government is also responsible in ensuring that the workers respect the interests of employers," he said.

Dr Mahathir gave the assurance that the Government would be fair in dealing with any conflict between employers and employees.

He reminded workers that for Malaysia to develop and grow, industrial peace and harmony must prevail as conflicts would only threaten Malaysia's competitiveness.

He said workers must also learn from the experience of certain developed countries where irresponsible industrial actions had result-

ed in higher production costs.

"Consequently, not only have their products failed to compete but their economic performance has also been affected and unemployment has increased to 20 per cent, resulting in many becoming homeless."

When this happened, Dr Mahathir said, it was difficult for the affected countries to bring about a recovery of their respective economies.

"It is for this reason that we need to be cautious and take into account the general interest (of the nation) before taking industrial action."

Dr Mahathir also described

workers in the country as being the most lucky ones in the world as anybody entering the job market could easily be employed if they were not choosy.

"The Malaysian workers' standard of living is relatively high compared to workers in other developing countries."

He said the situation existed because of the close co-operation and understanding between employers, workers and the Government.

The situation had contributed to industrial peace and this, he said, had enabled the Government to focus not only on developing the economy but also in bringing in

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foreign investments.

"We must maintain and enhance this co-operation and understanding in the interest of the workers and the future of our country."

With 27 years left to achieve a developed nation status, Dr Mahathir said, it was essential that workers play their part effectively.

He said that apart from ensuring the investment environment would be good, workers must also work towards improving productivity and efficiency for the nation's products to remain competitive in international markets.

"Let us heighten our determination and strive towards becoming a fully developed society which is highly respected."