

Dr Mahathir: more sympathetic

Malaysia is to workers

By Adlin M. Zabri

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the people-elected Malaysian Government was more sympathetic to workers in this country than the foreign unions are.

He said the foreign unions were not sincere in their sympathies, adding that their intentions were directed at their own interests rather than those of Malaysian workers.

"Certainly they will not be sympathetic to our aspiration to become a developed nation which is able to compete and outclass them," he said.

Speaking at the 1993 Workers' Day dinner at Hotel Istana here tonight, the Prime Minister said these foreign unions want workers in developing countries to form strong militant unions which were bent on picketing, always demanding higher wages, seeking fewer working hours and others that could push up production costs.

"They hope that by doing these, their products will be able to compete successfully with products produced by developing nations."

Dr Mahathir said what was strange was that the foreign unions ignored the plight of the very poor workers who did not make products competitive compared with those produced in developed nations.

economic growth, it had continued to grow at an encouraging rate.

He said the political stability, the ability of Malaysian workers, productivity and their discipline had attracted investors to Malaysia.

He said there was no short cut to riches either for workers or the entrepreneurs.

"Pickets and other forms of threats to employers may succeed in increasing wages and other rewards faster. But countries and workers known for their inclination to take industrial actions will not be able to attract investors and develop the countries. Unemployment will rise."

The Prime Minister said when the number of unemployed increased, wages would certainly drop because demand for workers was less than supply. In the end, the strikes would fail. More industries would have to close down and move elsewhere.

On the other hand, Dr Mahathir said, the safest and most assured way to increase wages was to ensure that the industries succeed.

"Because of the effective strategies and incentives by the Government, the job opportunities in Malaysia today are more than workers. If employers are not willing to raise wages, they will not get the workers. But we must realise that if wages are increased too high and too fast, investors will go to

"Actually the fate of workers in the least developed countries which failed to enter the industrial sector is a lot worse."

Dr Mahathir said there was no sense of sympathy and brotherhood shown by workers and their unions from the developed nations to the workers in least developed countries.

He said it was clear that their feelings of sympathy and brotherhood were not sincere, but aimed at destroying the economy of developing nations such as Malaysia which had successfully ventured into the industrial sector.

Dr Mahathir said the Government hoped that workers and unions in Malaysia would not be tricked by the sympathy and workers' brotherhood from foreign unions in the developed nations.

"If their advice and assistance are accepted, both national development, job opportunities and security will be adversely affected."

He said Malaysia should be thankful that while the developed nations and other developing economies were experiencing a slowdown in

other countries.

"The fact is industrial peace and high productivity are more effective and lasting in increasing wages than the obsolete methods such as industrial actions."

He said higher productivity could be achieved through improvement of efficiency, hard work, willingness to learn new production methods, high work ethics and discipline.

"All these do not involve extra cost. On the other hand, productivity will increase. This is what is called increased productivity. This way wages can be increased without additional cost and increasing the price of goods."

He said the failure of industries in the West was due to the rising cost to the extent that their products could no longer compete with goods from Asia, including developing countries like Malaysia.

Dr Mahathir said the attitude of workers in the developed nations had not changed. "They continue to demand higher wages, fewer working hours and higher unemployment benefits. Their executives want high

wages and their shareholders want excessive dividends."

Also present were Human Resources Minister Datuk Lim Ah Lek, his deputy Datuk M. Mahalingam, Public Services Department director-general Tan Sri Mahmud Taib, the ministry's secretary-general Datuk Anthony Yeo, Malaysian Employers' Federation president Datuk Dr Mokhzani Abdul Rahim, Malaysian Trades Union Congress president Zainal Rampak, Cuepacs president Mohamed Mat Jid and Malaysian Labour Organisation (MLO) secretary-general K. Sanmugam.

In his speech, Lim said the function was to strengthen the tripartite mechanism used in managing labour affairs as well as a sign of recognition to employers and employees.

He said that in other countries, it was rare for Governments to organise official functions to celebrate Workers' Day and therefore the Malaysian Government's action must be appreciated by workers in this country, including the international workers' community.