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Mahathir-workers

MAHATHIR CALLS FOR NEGOTIATIONS TO RESOLVE INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES

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KEMAMAN, Oct 12 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today described industrial action in any form as primitive, and called on employers and employees to do away with pickets and strikes.

Both sides should resolve disputes through negotiations, and when this failed they should approach a third party to arbitrate, he told a news conference after opening the direct reduction plant of Perwaja Steel Sdn Bhd near here.

Dr Mahathir said employers and workers in Europe and the United States seemed to be engaged in a test of strength when attempting to resolve disputes, and they were settled only when one side gave in.

As a result of frequent industrial action, the unemployment rate in Europe, for example, had risen to 10 per cent, he said, adding that many industries had to shut down owing to rising wages for workers.

The prime minister said the wages in this country were competitive though they were not as low as those in several neighbouring countries, and that it was the cost of labour which enabled industries in the country progress. -- more

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He said that Malaysia, as a developing country, could be said to be backward because it lacked high technology, expertise and large capital. But, he added, the country had an important asset, which was the competitive cost of labour, and this should be safeguarded.

Dr Mahathir advised workers not to be misled by trade unions of developed countries which urged them to seek higher wages, saying this was only a ploy to weaken the country's industrial sector.

On Perwaja, he said the steel industry should continue to progress to help Malaysia become a developed country because the steel industry was a catalyst for growth of the industrial sector.

He said about RM8 billion had been spent on Perwaja's activities which he said had attained a standard to be proud of.

Terengganu Menteri Besar Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad, Perwaja chairman Tan Sri Zainal Abidin Sulong and Perwaja managing director Tan Sri Eric Chia were among those present at the ceremony. -- Bernama

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