

Discarding the primitive approach in settling disputes

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DATUK Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said workers and employers should not adopt a primitive approach in settling disputes.

The Prime Minister said: "In a civilised society, rules and regulations are created to ensure that society is peaceful and safe.

"The legal system is also devised to help resolve whatever disputes in societies in an organised manner so that the parties concerned do not suffer losses.

"This approach is not adopted by employers and workers. Instead, a more primitive method is used — a 'test of strength' through strikes or other forms of industrial action. Whoever is stronger wins."

In his opening address, the Umno president said this method was bad be-

cause the results were not based on fair consideration and ability to meet demands but rather on a "test of strength".

In other words, the results were obtained not on the basis of work done but rather on the ability to destruct, he said, adding that this would lead to higher costs while competitive ability was reduced. Sometimes, this resulted in closures.

He added that one of the factors which had caused developed countries to experience recession was rising production costs which had affected their ability to compete in the international market.

Their workers and trade unions continued to rely on a test of strength, such as strikes and industrial action, when settling disputes.

That was why their economy remained weak even though other factors such as capital, technology and international market gave them a certain advantage, he said.

Dr Mahathir said: "As long as our cost of production is low, we can compete, continue to develop and progress. But if we also use the 'test of strength' approach in settling industrial disputes, we too will face production cost increases and lose our competitive edge.

"The effect on us would be worse because we don't have our own technology, we are short of capital and our domestic market is small.

"The Western ways are not always the most appropriate. We should not accept all their suggestions."