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Mahathir - warning

WEST WANTS TO IMPOSE MINIMUM WAGE IN SOUTH COUNTRIES, MAHATHIR

from Ali Mamat

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NEW DELHI, March 28 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today warned countries of the South that efforts are being made by the developed countries to impose minimum wages for workers in developing countries.

Describing the move as yet another policy of restriction on developing countries after the regulations on democracy, the environment and human rights, Dr Mahathir said the regulations on minimum wages could wreak disaster on developing countries by taking away the only privilege they still had -- low labour cost.

Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Haji Ahmad Badawi told Malaysian newsmen that Dr Mahathir gave the warning during the plenary session of the G-15 meeting here.

Six heads of government are attending the meeting. They are Prime Minister of India (host) Narasimha Rao, President Suharto (Indonesia), President Robert Mugabe (Zimbabwe), President Abdou Diouf (Senegal), President Sani Abacha (Nigeria) and Dr Mahathir.

Abdullah said that Dr Mahathir had told the meeting that if the developing countries lost the remaining privilege -- low labour cost -- it would be the workers who would suffer because high labour costs would affect the economic activities in developing countries. -- more

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Mahathir - warning 2 New Delhi

"Without the capacity to compete, factories will be forced to close down and in the end unemployment will rise," Dr Mahathir said.

According to Abdullah, Dr Mahathir had told the meeting that such minimum wage regulations should be opposed at all costs by developing countries as such regulation was not justifiable in their context.

When Dr Mahathir said low labour costs were an advantage to developing countries, it was made with the understanding that the standard of living in such countries was low, Abdullah said.

The wages might appear low but they in alignment with the standard of living in developing countries which was still low.

According to Abdullah, Dr Mahathir urged the developing countries to be united in facing the latest threat and take a lesson from previous regulations imposed by the West. -- more

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Mahathir - warning 3 New Delhi

On regulations governing the sustaining of tropical forests in developing countries, the Prime Minister told the plenary session that if they were adhered to it would affect the revenue of developing countries which had such forests.

He said the forests were the resources of developing countries, which had to be tapped to get revenue.

They were very important resources to developing countries for use as fuel and for making furniture, Dr Mahathir said.

Dr Mahathir expressed the hope that the G-15 would adopt a joint stand to face the various regulations forced on developing countries by the developed ones.

Abdou Diouf spoke about the western media's evil practice of reporting only on the bad side of things in developing countries such as disease and poverty particularly in Africa. -- more

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Mahathir - warning 4 (last) New Delhi

Abdou Diouf, who is Chairman of the Organisation of African Unity, (OAU) said the western press only concentrated on the shortcomings and seldom reported on the progress and the good things being done and planned in developing countries.

President Suharto raised the problem of external debts borne by developing countries and said this affected their development process.

He expressed the hope that it would become an issue in the global agenda.

President Mugabe stressed the need for G-15 countries to adopt a joint stand on the restructuring of the United Nations particularly at the security council level so that its role would become more democratic.

Abdullah said the plenary session also decided that the quorum for the G-15 summit be reduced from 10 to at least five and heads of government unable to attend could send their representatives and their presence should be institutionalised.

Dr Mahathir is scheduled to hold separate meetings with President Suharto and President Abdou Diouf tonight and with President Menem of Argentina on Wednesday. -- Bernama

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