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Mahathir-pay

FOCUS OF PAY PRESSURE ON PRODUCER COUNTRIES, SAYS MAHATHIR - *overseas hip*

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NEW DELHI, March 29 ⁹⁴ (Bernama) -- Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the West's attempts to push developing countries to have a minimum wage for workers were directed at producer nations such as Malaysia, Indonesia and India.

The attempts to impose the minimum wage started after the Group of Seven (G-7) held a meeting recently to discuss unemployment in the developed countries, he told Malaysian journalists covering the ongoing summit of the Group of 15 (G-15) developing countries here.

"Their aim is clear, they want to make it impossible for us to sell our goods.

"When workers are paid high wages, factories will have to close, the workers will lose their jobs and then the unemployment in the developed countries will be solved," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the developed countries did not take into account the fact that the standard of living was usually low in developing countries and that the workers were not yet ready to adjust to a high standard of living.

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All this while, the developed countries had imposed various regulations on developing countries linked with trade, such as the question of democracy, human rights and the environment.

He said the heads of government at the G-15 summit, where he had raised the issue of the minimum wage, were agreed that developing countries did not want the West to impose its systems and perceptions on the issues of democracy, human rights, the environment and minimum wage.

"The question of trade should be separate from any unrelated condition," he said, adding that Western countries seemed to go back on their word.

For example, he said, the United States still talked of "Super 301", on the imposition of conditions on certain countries in their trade.

Dr Mahathir also said that the plenary session of the G-15 summit was agreed that the structure of the United Nations must be reorganised for it to be more democratic. -- more

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He said it was undemocratic for a superpower in the UN to veto the wish of the majority of member nations.

"If this continues, their talk of democracy will be meaningless. They want to force democracy on all other countries but there is no democracy in the UN itself," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the voice of the majority could not be simply dismissed just because five big countries in the UN held the veto power.

He also said the other G-15 member countries shared Malaysia's view that the Western media always carried adverse reports on the developing countries.

However, he added, some of these countries feared that they would be the target of the Western media if they stated their stand openly in the matter.

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Dr Mahathir said the Western countries assumed that they had more rights than other countries.

"While we do not interfere in their affairs, they feel they can not only interfere in ours but also direct any country to follow their concepts, failing which they will impose various forms of pressure," he said.

He said Western countries had yet to understand that a sovereign nation had the right to manage its domestic matters on its own. -- Bernama

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