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Mahathir-safety

SAFETY, HEALTH FEATURES A MUST IN TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER, SAYS DR M

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KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 4 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister ¹⁹⁴ Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that Malaysia, in its eagerness to attract foreign investment, must not forget to incorporate safety and health features in every transfer of technology.

It must ensure that all equipment, materials and technology brought into the country are safe for use and are recognised by the international community, he said.

"In our eagerness to attract foreign investors, we must not forget the safety features and the health of workers," he said when launching the National Occupational Safety and Health Campaign for this year, at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) here.

Dr Mahathir said a well-arranged and neat workplace with good safety and health features would enable employees to work efficiently and comfortably, resulting in higher productivity.

Employers must remember that in the event of accidents in the workplace, they would suffer losses as a result of poor productivity and other costs.

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Dr Mahathir said the government also had to incur costs though the employers contributed to the Social Security Organisation (Socso) for treatment of the injured, adding that losses in any industry or business would reduce government revenue.

The affected worker would definitely undergo suffering while his or her family would lose its breadwinner, he said.

"These direct and indirect costs will lower the rate of productivity and eventually raise the prices of our goods, and jeopardize our competitiveness in the international market," he said.

Apart from costs, he said, quality would also be adversely affected if there were problems in the workplace, such as absence of safety and health features.

He said skilled workers hampered by occupational hazards would be unable to produce quality goods. -- more

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Dr Mahathir said the recruitment of new workers would incur additional cost because they would have to be trained to become skilful.

Malaysia, he said, had become a paradise for workers because more than one million foreigners were now working in the country and Malaysians themselves could choose the jobs they preferred.

He said employers were forced to offer high wages in the competition to recruit workers from a limited workforce.

"The workers stand to gain in such a situation. Their gain is achieved without any industrial action, without damage to production machinery or reduction in productivity," he said.

The prime minister said it was disheartening that when the country was striving to improve the level of safety and health at the workplace, developed countries were raising issues related to labour standards. -- more

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He said they were linking a social clause in the labour standards with international trade and trying to force developing countries to abide by regulations formulated by them.

"It is not our intention to exploit workers but the fact is that their social clause will only raise production cost without any additional benefit for the workers," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that should cost rise, then Malaysian goods would be unable to compete with the goods of the developed countries and eventually the local industries will be stifled, there would be fewer jobs, unemployment would emerge and all the privileges of the social clause would not be enjoyed at all.

Dr Mahathir later presented the "Tokoh Negara" Award for Occupational Safety and Health to the former Director-General of the Factories and Machinery Department, Encik Abdul Jalil Mahmood.

The Occupational and Safety Award for the large industry category was won by Hitachi Semi-conductor Sdn Bhd of Pulau Pinang. -- more

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Earlier, at the same function, Human Resources Minister Datuk Lim Ah Lek said the government was always concerned for the safety and health of workers.

The measures it had taken included setting up the Occupational Safety and Health Advisory Panel in 1985, setting up of the National Occupational Safety and Health Institute in 1992 and substituting the Factories and Machinery Act 1967 with the Occupational and Safety Act 1994, he said.

Lim said that apart from the laws, awareness and commitment on the part of employers and workers were important to ensure occupational safety and health.

The theme of the campaign is "Towards a Safe and Healthy Work Culture", and activities planned for the month-long campaign include talks, poster competitions and exhibitions.

About 2,000 employers and workers attended the launching ceremony. --

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