

Dr M: Transfer technology with safety features

**Reports by
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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today called on foreign investors to incorporate safety and health features in the transfer of technology in this country.

The Prime Minister said that while the Government is aware that foreign investors did not actually neglect its importance, the situation can be improved.

Malaysia, in its quest to attract these investors, must not forget the importance of safety and health features for workers.

"We must make sure all equipment, materials and technology brought into the country are safe for use and are recognised by the international community," he said when launching this year's National Occupational Safety and Health Campaign at the Putra World Trade Centre here.

Dr Mahathir said that

workers were the country's vital asset and served as a backbone to the process of development. Economic and social development would not be achieved without their contributions.

"That is why efforts are always being made to ensure their safety and health," he said, adding that safety and health aspects should be taught in schools and higher learning institutes.

He said employers would also lose in the case of accidents because their productivity, besides other costs, would be adversely affected.

The Government, he said, also had to incur additional costs although the employers had contributed to the Social Security Organisation for treatment of those injured. It would also reduce Government revenue and the family of the affected worker would lose a breadwinner.

"These direct and indirect costs will reduce the

rate of productivity and raise the prices of goods, besides jeopardising our competitiveness in the international market," he said.

Dr Mahathir said skilled workers affected by occupational hazards would not be able to produce quality goods.

The new worker intakes would cause employers additional cost because these workers would have to be trained first.

He regretted that while Malaysia was striving to uplift the level of safety and health features at workplaces, developed countries were raising issues related to labour standards.

"They are linking a social clause in the labour standards with international trade and trying to force developing countries to obey regulations they formulate.

"It is not our intention to exploit workers but the fact is that their social clause will only increase

production cost without additional benefit to the workers," he said.

If the cost increased, he said, Malaysian goods would not be able to compete with those from developed countries. The local industries would not grow and employment opportunities would not increase. As a result, all the privileges of the social clause would not be enjoyed at all.

The Prime Minister described Malaysia as a workers' paradise, saying that that was why more than one million foreigners were working in the country now. Malaysians could be selective in seeking jobs.

He said because of this situation, employers had to offer high wages in the competition to recruit workers from a limited workforce.

"In such a situation, it is the workers who stand to gain," he said, adding that the benefit was obtained without industrial action," he said.