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Mahathir-Unions

AVOID CONFRONTATION, PM TELLS TRADE UNIONS

LANGKAWI, July 29 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has called on trade unions to make Malaysia a truly unbeatable country by becoming partners in Malaysia Incorporated instead of being confrontational to employers and the government.

Describing trade unions as the "missing partner" in the highly successful story of Malaysia Incorporated that has resulted in Malaysia's spectacular economic growth, he said the trade union view is short term with the most important thing for them being the pay rise.

"There is only one thing regrettable about Malaysia Incorporated. One partner is missing. The trade unions and the workers are not conscious partners," he said when opening the second Langkawi International Dialogue at the Berjaya Langkawi Beach Resort here tonight.

The dialogue brings together 250 government leaders, including six heads of government, and captains of industry who will over the next three days -- against the backdrop of the sun and sea of this holiday island -- take the concept of "Smart Partnership" to new dimensions in forging long-term win-win situations in boosting trade and investment.

Smart partnership, the theme of this dialogue and the inaugural one last year, has been billed as the new business wave of the future and is about important people making important decisions to enhance the way of doing business.

Dr Mahathir said the mindset of trade unions has prevented close cooperation in the spirit of Malaysia Incorporated.

"But if the trade unions abandon their traditional stance and enter into the smart partnership of Malaysia Incorporated, Malaysia will be truly unbeatable," he said.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia Incorporated -- introduced in the early 1980s soon after Dr Mahathir became Prime Minister -- is the embodiment of smart partnership between the civil servants, the private sector and the so-called political masters.

"And the partnership is smart because it yields results, results which are shared without exception by everyone, not only the three partners but the people and the nation as a whole," Dr Mahathir said.

He spoke of how Malaysia Incorporated has actually benefited the trade unions and workers themselves, as shown by unemployment being practically nil in the country now, while wages and perks have gone up for the workers.

"Such is the demand for labour resulting in part, at least from the Malaysia Incorporated concept, that workers now choose their employers and not the other way round," he added.

Arguing against the trade union stance of confrontation and industrial action, the Prime Minister said a pay rise might result in cost going up and consequently price increases, loss of competitiveness, sales and profitability.

He also said that to trade unions, working with employers through the Malaysia Incorporated concept is to undermine the will, to make unreasonable demands and establish a bargaining position.

The unions also act on the basis of strength and the threat to do damage while demands must be met first and the funds must come not because of greater profit through productivity but simply through making the end users or consumers pay more.

This is contrary to the Malaysia Incorporated approach where the

sharing comes later, when profits are made.

The Prime Minister asked: " But why are the trade unions and the workers not partners in Malaysia Incorporated?"

Dr Mahathir spoke of the influence which international trade unions have on their Malaysian counterparts.

He portrayed the international trade unionist as someone who dislikes to see cooperation between workers and their union with their avowed enemies, the employers.

Their idea of helping the workers earn more is through confrontation and industrial action.

He said by coming on board Malaysia Incorporated, the country's economy will grow and prosper even faster and everyone will have bigger and bigger slices of the expanding economic cake. -- BERNAMA

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