

30 APR 1996

Mahathir-Workers

WORKERS' WISDOM ENSURES GOOD INVESTMENT CLIMATE, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, April 30 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that part of the nation's progress is due not only to workers' contributions but also their wisdom in preserving industrial harmony to attract more investments.

"This generates more employment opportunities, causes a shortage of workers and forces employers to pay more," the Prime Minister said in his message to mark Workers Day tomorrow.

On the other hand if the industrial climate deteriorated and there was no industrial peace, investments would be affected, there would be no increase in jobs and there would be no pay rise, he said.

"What is worse many people will be unemployed," he said.

He said many people in developed countries were unemployed because those holding jobs were not prepared to accept lower pay, their costs remained high and their products were unable to compete with those of other countries.

Dr Mahathir said as a developing country Malaysia did not enjoy many advantages other than low cost of living and low wages.

Developed countries had many advantages, including greater access to capital and high technology, comprehensive support industries, a rich market that could help local production, knowledge and a worldwide marketing network, experienced management and many other things, he said.

Malaysia on the other hand had to buy technology from advanced countries causing the cost of its industrial goods to continue to increase.

"Now the developed countries say they will block the entry of our goods into their markets if they are not satisfied with our democracy, our human rights record or environmental protection," Dr Mahathir said.

Developed countries had already restricted the entry of Malaysia's tropical timber into their markets, purportedly because Malaysia's timber industry threatened the environment, he said.

"Their real aim is to protect their timber industry and other industries," Dr Mahathir said.

The Prime Minister said actions taken by the developed countries would usually cause Malaysia's economy to decline or to remain stagnant.

"If our industries do not expand, many people will be unemployed and those working will not get better pay," he said.

He called on Malaysian workers to be wary of trade unions from developed countries that expressed sympathy for the plight of Malaysian workers.

"Previously when we did not have products to compete with them, they did not show any sympathy.

"Now all of a sudden they show sympathy and express solidarity with our workers. We need to be on guard as there may be a hidden motive," Dr Mahathir said.

He said the government wanted to increase not only workers' incomes but also their purchasing power.

The Prime Minister said higher pay should not result in increased cost of living or make the country's goods less competitive in the world market.

"God willing, if we can take care of these two things, workers will truly reap the benefits," he said.

Dr Mahathir said local workers had been successful in their struggles.

The local workers' standard of living had been continually rising,

partly due to the unions' championing of their cause and also because of the nation's progress, he said. -- BERNAMA

SJA MTA YBY