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Unions-Incorporated

UNIONS RESPOND WELL TO M'SIA INCORPORATED CALL

KUALA LUMPUR, July 30 (Bernama) -- Public and private sector unions today welcomed the Prime Minister's call for them to be partners in the Malaysia Incorporated concept but said their role needs to be clarified.

Describing Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's statement as a recognition of the unions' role in national development, Cuepacs and the Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) said they hoped to discuss with the government the role it had in mind for them.

Cuepacs, the umbrella body for civil service unions, wants the Human Resources Ministry to set up a committee to clarify the scope of its involvement in Malaysia Incorporated.

Cuepacs president Mohamed Mat Jid said the Trade Unions Act needed to be amended to enable unions to set up companies.

"All this while we have not had the opportunity to be seriously involved in the Malaysia Incorporated concept because the matter had never been discussed, either within Cuepacs or with the government," he told reporters after the opening of the National Joint Council (Staff Side) delegates' conference here.

When opening the Langkawi International Dialogue yesterday, Dr Mahathir urged trade unions to make Malaysia a truly unbeatable country by becoming partners in Malaysia Incorporated instead of being confrontational to employers and the government.

Cuepacs secretary-general N. Siva Subramaniam said that to his understanding Cuepacs' role as suggested by the Prime Minister covered a wide area.

It was not limited to business matters but extended to becoming partners in efforts to develop Malaysia, he said.

"Cuepacs subscribes to the concept that all unions in Malaysia should be involved in this endeavour because we believe that for Malaysia to progress, we must be united and work with the government," he said.

MTUC president Zainal Rampak said MTUC had always wanted to have dialogues with the Prime Minister to discuss matters such as the country's economy and government policies, including the Malaysia Incorporated concept.

"Through such dialogues, we would be able to hear the PM's views on anything he deems fit to discuss with us," he said.

"We are not fighting for bread and butter issues alone because we are also concerned with national interest and well-being," he told Bernama.

MTUC is the sole trade union centre for the private sector, representing some 700,000 workers.

Zainal said compared with foreign trade unions, including those in developed countries, Malaysian trade unions were more responsible in their dealings with employers.

The majority of negotiations between employers and workers in the country were settled through direct talks, he said.

"Unlike foreign trade unions which often resorted to industrial action like strike, workers here are willing to sit down and negotiate with employers," he said.

Dr Mahathir had also said that international trade unionists dislike to see cooperation between workers and employers, saying "their idea of helping the workers earn more is through confrontation and industrial action". -- BERNAMA

AZZ YBY