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Mahathir-Prices

GOVERNMENT CONTROLS PRICES TO ENSURE FAIRNESS TO ALL

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 1 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the government will control price increases of goods to ensure fairness to workers who do not enjoy a pay increase in the wake of the economic turmoil affecting the country.

While thanking the workers for not demanding for a salary increase except for annual increment, the prime minister said the government would act against businessmen who indiscriminately raise prices because such acts would aggravate the situation.

"It is not fair if they raise the prices of goods and we do not raise the wages to buy these goods. Hence we prefer to control price increases so that we do not have to raise wages apart from the normal increments.

"In this way we can be more competitive in the world market," he said when addressing Tenaga Nasional Berhad staff at Universiti Tenaga Nasional (Uniten) in Kajang, near here.

The assembly by Tenaga Nasional workers, associations and unions from the Klang Valley was held to show support for Dr Mahathir as prime minister to tackle the economic woes the country is now facing.

The prime minister said it was unfair for the government to allow the businessmen to raise prices when the workers, who did not enjoy a pay increase, had to pay more for the goods.

"That is why I have criticised, even reprimanded those who simply raise prices when the workers' fixed wages have not increased. They raise the prices so that the workers and others with fixed incomes will have problems.

"They want to make profit when our country is facing problems but we will take action because what they are doing will weaken us," he said to applause from the Tenaga Nasional workers and Uniten students who carried banners expressing their support for him and the government.

Yesterday Dr Mahathir likened businessmen who raise prices at a time when the country is facing problems to saboteurs of Malaysia's economy.

Today he called on the people from all strata of society to be more disciplined in facing the economic turmoil and not to do anything that could aggravate the situation.

To the workers, he said they should work harder to increase productivity while the students should master all fields of knowledge so that Malaysia need not depend on other nations.

"If possible, don't go overseas to study. In our country there are competent teachers.

"In this way we can save our money. If we have such an attitude we will overcome all our problems," he said.

Earlier, the gathering pledged its full support for Dr Mahathir and expressed its confidence in him to turn the economy around in a short time.

-- BERNAMA

AH AFY JK