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Mahathir-workers

MAHATHIR ACKNOWLEDGES WORKERS' CONTRIBUTION TO NATION-BUILDING

KUALA LUMPUR, 30 April (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad expressed confidence that the tri-partite cooperation between unions, the private sector and the government under Malaysia Incorporated would accelerate national development and boost income for all.

In his message to mark Workers Day tomorrow, Dr Mahathir said he was happy and welcomed the unions' willingness to cooperate with the private sector and the government.

Industrial action would not bring any good, he said, if the society remained impoverished, the country in chaos and trade and manufacturing, non-existent.

"It is time for us to seek a better way to resolve problems between employers and workers.

"Wealth should be equally distributed between all parties -- the employer, worker, investor and society," said Dr Mahathir.

Dr Mahathir advised unions and workers to reflect on the problems besetting Western countries such as unemployment of between 10 and 50 per cent.

On the contrary, job opportunities in Malaysia exceeded the labour supply and the shortage of local labour had pushed up wages by several folds, he said.

Dr Mahathir said the government was all for wage increase as it wanted the people's living standard to keep improving but a wage increase greater than productivity would only cause inflation in prices of goods and living costs.

"More than that, if our goods and services become expensive, we will not be able to compete internationally .. our industry will lose out and eventually will not be able to support jobs for us. In another words we'll be jobless," he said.

This had happened to developed countries in Europe resulting in distressed workers having to live under bridges, sleeping on park benches, were frozen to death during winter or became mentally ill.

Dr Mahathir said Western countries used to entertain their workers' demands as they could siphon away riches from their colonies but these colonies were now independent and able to compete with their colonial masters.

The West exported industrial action to developing countries so that their former colonies could not compete with them, he said.

"In the past they have never bothered about the sufferings of our workers. Can we now trust them when they say they are saddened by the discrimination of our workers?"

Dr Mahathir said industrial actions and strikes originated from the West where their application was relevant because employers were indeed discriminatory of the workers.

But when unions grew stronger and were successful, justice became secondary and instead wage increase was put first regardless of whether the employer could afford to pay or not.

"In other words, demands were entertained based on who is stronger. It is not much different from settling a dispute through a boxing match which is very primitive," he said.

In the process, both sides got battered and injured and eventually the

soaring costs of settlement had to be borne by society in the form of inflation.

In a civilised society, settlement of dispute between two parties is done by a third and uninvolved party, said Dr Mahathir.

-- BERNAMA

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