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Mahathir-Workers

EMPLOYERS SHOULD APPRECIATE WORKERS' MODERATION, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 2 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today employers should appreciate the attitude of moderation and responsibility shown by Malaysian workers, and where possible they should meet the workers' claims.

However, the Prime Minister said because of uncertainties in the economy and profits, salaries need not be raised if employers could not afford to do so.

"But allowances that are not fixed should be considered. As an employer the government also behaves this way," he said when opening the 21st convention of Cuepacs here.

Dr Mahathir said he was very happy that unions and workers in Malaysia had been careful in not resorting to strikes and other industrial action during the current economic downturn.

"There were no strikes and unreasonable demands made by unions," Dr Mahathir said.

He said unions and workers should come up with other approaches to save themselves from the threat posed by currency traders and short-term investors, whom he labelled as modern capitalists "who are more cruel and fierce than old capitalists".

He said that for now workers should work together with their employers to save the country's businesses and economy with the cooperation of the government.

This way a strong wall could be built to ward off the attacks by modern capitalists who were only looking for quick profits without giving a thought to the fate of workers, Dr Mahathir said.

He said the weapon available to unions to resort to strike and industrial action would be ineffective against these modern capitalists, and if used would only bring more hardship to the workers.

"This is because they are not directly exposed to industrial action by workers in view that they are not even present or stay in the countries they attack to the extent of making workers poor and unemployed," he said.

Dr Mahathir said unlike old capitalists who built factories and used workers to produce goods, present-day capitalists did not employ many workers but instead used capital and big loans to buy and sell foreign currencies, including the ringgit.

"Of course, this small number of expert workers was highly paid, and they do not have unions and need not strike.

"But because of their work tens of millions of workers in poor countries lose their jobs and become unemployed. These are the modern capitalists replacing the old capitalists. They are more cruel and fierce than the old capitalists," he said.

He said while foreign investments were welcome, local investments were more lasting and gave better returns.

Dr Mahathir said profit should not be fully distributed to shareholders or other parties because part of it should be reinvested. "By doing this, the country's economy can be revived and expanded," he said.

He said although Cuepacs was a confederation of unions for government employees, it was also involved in efforts to develop the economy and boost exports through an efficient and organised administration.

Dr Mahathir said delays or lack of efficiency in government services would increase the production cost of goods for the local or export market,

while a fast and an efficient service would reduce cost and result in cheap goods and low inflation.

"With this the economy will recover fast and when it recovers, it is certain that workers' claims will get the appropriate treatment," he said.

Dr Mahathir said production capacity and productivity should be increased through efficiency and cooperation between management and workers.

He hoped that bribes would not be used to get support in the election of Cuepacs' new committee as had happened in political parties.

"It will be most unfortunate if the successful ones are only those who can afford to pay," he said.

-- BERNAMA

MAM YBY