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PM: Nation grateful to workforce

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the nation is grateful to the workforce for understanding the situation Malaysia is in and not acting in an irresponsible manner.

Such actions would have made difficult the economic recovery efforts, the Prime Minister said in his Workers' Day message.

Dr Mahathir also said he was proud that trade unions in Malaysia understand their role and truly safeguard the interest of workers.

"For that reason, there is industrial peace in Malaysia and this has directly helped in economic recovery," he said.

Dr Mahathir said economic recovery would bring much benefits to workers besides helping to convince foreign investors to do business here. He said with such investments, there would be more jobs. And when jobs outnumbered the labour force, employers would be compelled to raise wages.

Elaborating on industrial peace and the importance of workers being responsible, Dr Mahathir said Malaysians had seen how things worsened in countries where workers routinely resorted to industrial action and demanded wages beyond the capacity of their employers.

Often, the value of currency and inflation neutralised wage increases because their income could not buy them more goods, in fact it was less than what they could get with the old income, he added.

In Malaysia, although the wage rise was not big, the stability of the ringgit and low inflation rate meant the workers' livelihood was not affected. The percentage of workers who lost their jobs and were unemployed was small in Malaysia.

"In reality, there should not be unemployment as new job opportunities outnumber the number of jobless," he added.

At the same time, there remain many foreign workers as Malaysian workers are choosy, he added.

"At a time of economic downturn, we rightfully should be willing to take any jobs although earnings are not as in the good times. God willing when the economy recovers, we will once again secure good jobs and wages."

He said the Government, on its part, wished to see the income of the workers rise all the time as the increased wages could help in economic development through spending.

"Each time, someone spends there will be others who gain. The profit, in turn, will be spent and others, including workers, will gain. The more money changes hands, the better it is for the economy," he said.

But, he said, increased wages should come from rising productivity. In this context, he added Malaysia's success in the current stiff competition with other economies depended on the productivity level of workers.

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