

Estate workers to get monthly wages, amount yet to be determined

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — The Government has agreed in principle to monthly wages for estate workers with only the amount yet to be determined, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The quantum should not be too high as this could make the country uncompetitive internationally.

"In principle, we have agreed but have to determine the level. This is because with a daily salary, there is sometimes no salary at all.

"And when we average it out, the level is not the same," the Prime Minister said at a Press conference.

He said monthly wages would ensure that estate workers earned the same wages all year long, regardless of the weather.

Opening the meeting earlier, he said MIC president Datk Seri S. Samy Vellu had worked hard to ensure that estate workers would finally earn monthly wages.

"If the Cabinet did not discuss, he (Samy Vellu) would raise the issue of monthly wages for estate workers at every meeting," he said to applause from the crowd.

Samy Vellu, in his opening address, had said the 150-year history

of estate workers was going to be changed by Dr Mahathir with the decision to pay them monthly wages.

"The period of sunset will diminish and a new sunrise will be visible in the life of the estate workers when monthly wages come into effect," he said.

He also thanked the Human Resources Ministry for helping to better the lot of estate workers.

Asking delegates to reflect on the social deprivation experienced by estate workers over the century and a half, he said Malaysian Indians did not improve socio-economically as they did not believe that they would benefit proportionately from the wealth of the country.

"This is due to psychological impediments from the beginning which were reinforced by socio-economic and cultural factors," he said.

"The rubber industry workers have been neglected over the past 150 years and the MIC is committed to ensuring a dramatic and significant change in their lives in this century," he said.