

# PM: DON'T CREATE TROUBLE

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## Dr M chides MTUC over picket plan

By ANTHONY TAN and AUDREY EDWARDS

LANGRAWI: The country is already facing a lot of problems and there is no need to create new ones, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

"We already have enough problems. There is no need to create other problems," he said when asked about the proposal by the MTUC to stage a nationwide picket on May 12 against the reduction in EPF contribution by employees.

"If we hold pickets, people don't want to pay. People will react and other things (will happen). Who will benefit?" he told reporters after a one-day visit to see the progress of projects here yesterday.

Dr Mahathir said it was up to the MTUC

whether to go ahead with the picket.

"If they think such an approach can revive the country's economy, go ahead," he added.

Asked if he would meet the MTUC on the matter, he said: "They did not ask to meet me. They made the announcement first. It is difficult to meet them now."

The Government had announced a two percentage point cut in EPF contribution by employees as a move to encourage domestic spending as part of efforts to counter the slowing world economy.

On the Eighth Malaysia Plan, Dr Mahathir hoped that it would contribute towards making the country a developed nation by 2020.

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## MTUC to decide on picket next week

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Dr Mahathir said the country failed to achieve some targets, especially in poverty eradication, under the Seventh Malaysia Plan (1996-2000) because of the recession from 1997 to early 1999.

In an immediate response, MTUC president Senator Zainal Rampak said the working committee's decision to carry out the picket was subject to approval from the general council.

"It will be submitted for endorsement during the next general council meeting on

April 20," he said.

"The picket plan, he said, was proposed following numerous complaints from most union leaders and members regarding the EPF's announcement of a 6% annual dividend.

He also said the members were not satisfied with the EPF Board's explanation on the issue in view of the fact that there had been a proposal from the workers' members on the board to have a much higher dividend.

"This (the picket) is a message to the EPF board members especially the investment panel."