

Mahathir salutes local workers

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■ By SA'ODAH ELIAS

KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday praised local workers for not falling prey to instigations by foreign trade unions to make unrealistic demands on their employers.

"Praise to God, our trade unionists are rational and are generally more inclined towards negotiations than taking harsh industrial actions like picketing and organising strikes.

"They are wise to the tricks of unionists of the developed countries; and because of this, the industrial relations in the country is not bad," Dr Mahathir said after addressing about 10,000 workers from the private sector at a Workers Day rally at the Stadium Putra.

He said trade union members have contributed much towards maintaining the country's competitiveness and preserving the healthy industrial relations by not making unrealistic demands.

Dr Mahathir said the Government was aware that local trade unionists, when attend-

ing the International Labour Organisation meetings, were instigated to ask for unrealistic wage increases and demands.

In his speech, Dr Mahathir said trade unionists from some developed countries resorted to such tactics as they could no longer make demands in their own country because many industries had folded up due to high costs of production.

"They want to push up our costs so that their industries can become competitive again.

"Then they can go back to making excessive demands," he said.

The Prime Minister reminded local trade unions against taking a confrontational stand as this could cripple local industries.

Dr Mahathir said if local workers are taken in by such tactics, the country's industrialisation process would be halted.

"The workers would lose their jobs and the country would once again be at the mercy of market monopoly by the developed countries,"

he added.

Later, Dr Mahathir presented awards to companies and workers for being role models in their respective fields.

Kampung Baru based DUAH Auto Sdn Bhd was named the most caring employer in the small and medium industry category while Muar-based semiconductor company ST Microelectronics Sdn Bhd was awarded in the higher category.

Other winners were:

Infineon Technologies (M) Sdn Bhd (promotion of knowledge-workers), Batu Lintang Estate (best estate), Sarawak Teachers Union (model trade union in public sector) and Hitachi Consumer Products Workers Union (model trade union in private sector).

For model workers, the winners were 40-year-old Kenzer Tan Heck Wee from Infineon Technologies (male), Rohana Abdul Rahman, 33, from Elektrisola (M) Sdn Bhd (female), Teo Kah Choon, 32, of Subang Jaya Medical Centre (male/handicapped) and University of Malaya librarian, 47-year old K. Batmavathi (female/handicapped).