

# Mahathir: Locals won't do jobs of foreign workers

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KULIM: The Government is ready to freeze the employment of foreign workers provided locals were willing to take up their jobs, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

The Prime Minister said Malaysians should be prepared to work in plantations and other low-paying jobs when foreigners leave the country.

He added that it was impossible for the Government to freeze recruitment of foreign labour as long as Malaysians were not willing to take up the jobs.

Dr Mahathir, however, said the Government would not allow manufacturing companies to retrench locals and at the same time hire foreigners.

"We would like to know why some of these companies are taking in foreigners instead of locals. If the matter is reported to us, then we will inquire.

"If they prefer foreign workers, that is not something we

would like to see," he said after opening the RM5.5bil Silterra (M) Sdn Bhd, a state-of-the-art wafer fabrication plant here.

Dr Mahathir was asked to comment on the retrenchment of locals by manufacturers who kept foreign workers.

He said there were more job opportunities than retrenched workers and some of the affected workers only wanted to be in industries in which they were comfortable with.

On the economic slowdown in Singapore, Dr Mahathir said it was likely that some Malaysians working there would return and work here.

"However, I was told that companies have been asked not to dismiss their workers.

"The Government will not introduce any incentives just to woo them to come back. Our incentives are the stable country and our currency," he added.

On efforts by the Government to overcome the slowdown, Dr Mahathir said Malaysian industrialists should promote their products abroad.