

30 APR 2001

Mahathir-Workers

JOIN GOVT TO WARD OFF DANGER OF GLOBALISATION, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, April 30 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the government and workers should work and draw up measures together to make their defence more effective in warding off the danger that comes from globalisation.

As such, he said, it would be good for the workers while celebrating the Workers' Day to remind themselves of the danger that they could face through globalisation.

"If the present government is uncomfortable with globalisation and wants to impose certain conditions, it is because we are not convinced of sincerity of those who create globalisation and who try to force it upon others as fast as possible.

"We've seen how the freedom given to buy and sell currencies has caused millions of workers to be jobless and become poor again. Currency trading is part of the globalisation process," he said in his message in conjunction with the Workers' Day tomorrow.

The Prime Minister asked would not it be possible for globalisation, like the one being implemented, to bring about the same effect or even worse to the country and the workers in particular.

Narrating the danger of globalisation, he said that the capitalists had at one time oppressed the workers without pity, forcing the workers to form trade unions and labour parties to seek justice.

Through industrial actions and support of the labour parties, he said the oppression against the workers was reduced.

He said the new found strength led the workers to make unreasonable demand while the the labour or socialist governments began to nationalise all entrprises on the belief that the profits should be fairly distributed among the workers.

Dr Mahathir said this unfortunately caused productivity to decline and production cost to increase, making their products no longer competitive and there was no profit.

He said the country's economy suffered badly, making the workers to reject their parties and support parties siding with the employers and capitalists.

As the capitalist governments were no longer that oppressive to the workers to gain support, the labour parties had to accept the role of the capitalist investors.

"For that reason, we see that the labour party at present is not much different from the party that is supported by the capitalists. They also accept privatisation as a good approach to safeguard the interest of the workers. We see then no significant difference in the role of the workers and the employers.

"Society is forced to acknowledge that both parties, investors and capitalists on one side and the workers on another side, play important role," he said.

However, Dr Mahathir said the process of determining whose role was more important and should be appreciated had yet to be completed.

"As we all know that during the Cold War, the competition between socialist and communist countries, which purportedly were pro-workers or labour, and the free market groups which give priority to interest of the investors and capitalists,": he said.

The competition ended when the socialist block was defeated by the free

market capitalist block and the defeat was total with no more others to challenge the capitalists.

"With that, they no longer need to hold back their desire. The intention to control and exploit the world has returned.

"They create various approaches to realise their objective. Among them is globalisation or a world without border where their money could cross all borders to control everything," he said.

He said to them the workers only role was to contribute big profit to them and if the workers' wages in one country was a little bit higher, they would move their businesses to another country where the wages were cheaper.

Dr Mahathir said the result of such action would not be limited to the workers but the country and working community as a whole.

"Finally, those who are already rich, this new breed of capitalists, will be richer and the poor will be poorer. The situation is not much different from the unemployment of local workers because of wanting to replace them with foreign workers who are willing to accept lower wages.

"These possibilities should be given attention by the working community in this era of globalisation," he said.

Dr Mahathir said workers in the country were fortunate for being able to celebrate again the Workers' Day without threat of major unemployment.

The government on the other hand continued to appreciate and acknowledge their contribution and service to the country's progress, he said.

"While we are not denying the role of employers but employers on their own might not successful. But at the same time, we must also admit that without investors and employers, there will be no employment opportunities and no workers," he said.

On this year's theme "K-Pekerja Pemangkin Kecemerlangan Negara" (knowledge based workers are catalysts to national excellence), he said workers of today required more knowledge to enhance productivity and make their products more competitive.

"Naturally, this will mean that the workers must be willing to be retrained. Hopefully, the new skill will help the workers to increase their incomes," he said.

--BERNAMA

ES ES ABG