

01/05/2001

Pursue knowledge to progress, workers told

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today called on workers to pursue knowledge to help them become more competitive and productive.

In his Workers' Day message released here today, the Prime Minister said workers must undergo retraining programmes, and with their new expertise and knowledge, hopefully secure higher salaries.

"There is no guarantee that this will happen but what is certain is that failure to master the necessary knowledge will result in disaster, including unemployment."

Dr Mahathir said the theme of this year's Workers' Day celebrations "K-workers the Catalysts for Country's Excellence" was chosen because it was imperative for the country to have a knowledgeable workforce.

In the Third Outline Perspective Plan recently tabled in Parliament, Dr Mahathir said the Government had given a lot of attention to the training of workers so that they could contribute to growth.

The Government, he added, would also continue to look after the welfare of workers but cautioned them to be careful with their action which could affect Malaysia's attractiveness to investors.

Dr Mahathir added that one of the reasons the Government was wary of globalisation was because workers could suffer from the negative effects of a borderless world.

"We have seen how the freedom in currency transactions caused millions of workers to lose their jobs and become poor again. Sale and purchase of currencies is one aspect of globalisation.

"Will not globalisation, like the way things are now, cause similar or worse effects on countries and their workers?" Dr Mahathir asked.

Workers must remind themselves of the dangers of globalisation and work together with the Government to mitigate the negative effects.

While the Government appreciates the workforce's contributions to the country, Dr Mahathir said employers and capitalists were the ones providing the jobs.

"The capitalists used to oppress the workers and to seek justice, the workers set up unions and labour parties. Through industrial action and support of these parties, harassment of workers was reduced.

"Unfortunately, the unions and parties made unreasonable demands. The governments formed by the labour parties and the socialists nationalised many enterprises.

"However, this caused productivity to come down and cost of production to rise, paving the way for the demise of socialism and communism," he added.

The Prime Minister said although capitalism had triumphed during the Cold War, the Government must be careful as the capitalists could take advantage of globalisation.