

PM: Not many jobs for arts or religion grads

STAR - 5

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SHAH ALAM: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has revealed that 94% of unemployed graduates in the country are Malays.

And the reason for this?

Most of those who were jobless, he said, were holding a degree in arts or religion.

"Most of them are in fields that have nothing to offer in terms of requirements in the job market. That is why they should do these fields together with one other field that they can utilise in their careers," he said yesterday after attending the Workers Day Rally 2002 at Stadium Malawati here.

Dr Mahathir said there was no denying that arts and religion were equally important but "the fact is that there aren't many openings for graduates in these fields and there are too many of them (graduates)."

"When they don't get jobs, they get angry with the Government. Then they join the opposition parties. We didn't ask them to take up those fields. It is their choice.

"We cannot create job opportunities for them just because many of them are graduates in fields that are not essential," he said.

He added that the Government had allocated RM300mil for unemployed graduates to be on attachment

at government departments and agencies.

"This is to ensure that they gain experience, and to top it off, they are paid an allowance for six months," he said.

Dr Mahathir added that many Malays were also not gainfully employed because of their poor command of English.

He said although lovers of the national language would be angry over this issue, the fact remained that most jobs in the various industries, especially those set up by foreigners, called for English proficiency as a prerequisite.

"In this age of information technology, it will be near impossible without English to master the skills required for jobs these days," he said.

The Prime Minister added that English had become so crucial in global industries and economies that the French, Chinese, Japanese and many other nations were now making efforts to learn it.

On the handling of industrial problems, Dr Mahathir said the Malaysian way, based on negotiation, was the most suitable as it ensured that nobody won all or lost all.

Reminding workers not to be carried away with the western way of doing things, he said their approaches were not always right as they focused more on the "test of strength" than resolving ways through amicable ways.

"Our way is, we negotiate. That is why our Workers Day is celebrated not only by workers but also by employers and the Government.

"That is because we realise that without the contribution and participation of workers we will not be able to develop the country," he said.

Earlier in his speech, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia need not apologise to anyone for its practices although they might be considered by some as undemocratic and lacking in freedom.

He said ideologies and perception were not important compared to the need to safeguard the interest and well being of the people and the country.

He said the ideologies invented by the western world were for their own vested interest.

Dr Mahathir said he was not against the West but felt that its labour activists and non-governmental organisations had a different agenda when they accused the Government of not granting freedom to trade unions in the country.

"What is their objective? The good of the workers or to destroy our economy so we can no longer remain competitive when investors refuse to invest here and thus compound the unemployment problem?"

"Thank God, in Malaysia, strikes are not organised need-

lessly. Trade unions and employers are more inclined to negotiate," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who launched the rally, also presented 11 categories of awards.

The *Caring Employer* award for big industries went to Malaysia Shipyard and Engineering Sdn Bhd while Adampark Graphics Sdn Bhd bagged the award for the small and medium industries sector.

SKF Bearing Industries (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd won the Knowledge-Worker Generating Employer award for big industries and Syarikat Salmi Haji

Tamin for the small and medium industries category.

In the *Union category*, the National Union of Journalists won the award for the private sector and the Malaysian Armed Forces Civil Servants Association for the public sector.

The *Best Employee* awards were won by Ghazali Omar in the men's category, and Ashikin Ariffin in the women's.

Cheong Sun Wene received the *Best Disabled Employee* award for men while Naziaty Mohd Yacob bagged the prize for women.