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Mahathir-Unions

WORKERS' UNIONS SHOULD ACT RATIONALLY, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, May 29 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said workers' unions should act rationally and not to use their strength to impose their demand on others.

The Prime Minister said they must also consider whether their employers were capable of meeting their demand to avoid damaging the country.

"If the workers' unions feel that they are strong and make demand without considering the effect on business, employers and country, the workers themselves will suffer," he said in his address at the Workers Day 2003 gathering of public sector employees at the National Institute of Public Administration (Intan) in Bukit Kiara here today.

Dr Mahathir said that when asking for something, the workers' unions should consider the capability of the other parties as well as the country's economic situation.

When economy was bad, he said many companies faced problems and the country also suffered in terms of tax collections.

As such, he said the government could not increase its revenue as expected and eventually the country would have less capability as investment was not providing appropriate returns.

He said workers' unions in the country should not follow the footsteps of their counterparts in the West, whose arrogance and unrealistic demand had caused their countries to face economic problems and industries to close down.

Workers' unions in the West seemed to prefer confrontation than others to settle their demand and this had a negative effect on the economy of their countries, he said.

For example, Dr Mahathir said Britain was once well known as a car producer but now it could not afford to produce its own cars because of oppressive workers' unions as well as workers' low productivity and quality.

He said Britain eventually ended up with producing the Japanese car, Nissan, while its car companies like that producing Morris and Austin closed down, the Rolls Royce sold to Germany, Jaguar to the United States and Lotus to Malaysia.

"When workers' unions are too big and strong, they tend to lose that power rationalise and to differentiate between the good and the bad."

However, Dr Mahathir said that if the demand made by workers' unions was reasonable, then it should be entertained.

In this respect, he commended Cuepacs for not making unrealistic demand apart from their willingness to give and take.

Such an attitude could save the country from many things, he said.

"It is not to deny the rights of the employees but to explain the situation to them," he said.

Dr Mahathir hoped Cuepacs would continue to maintain such ties with the government to help the country move forward and achieve further progress.

-- BERNAMA

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