

Workers are nation's 'priceless assets'

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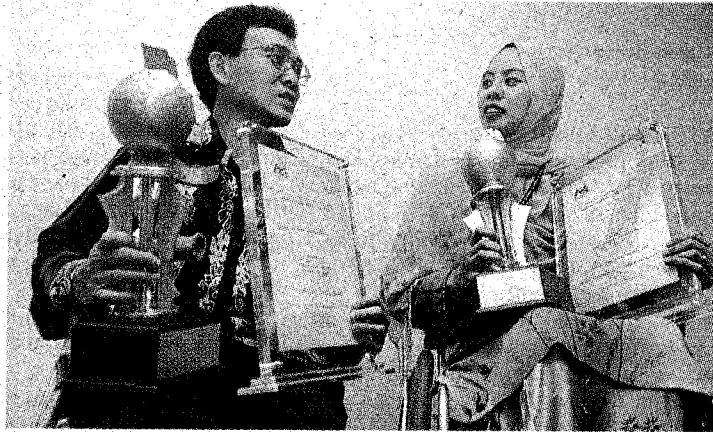
KUALA LUMPUR: Calling them "priceless assets", the prime minister paid tribute to the country's workers in a moving address at the Workers Day gathering yesterday.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who returned from Australia barely hours before his off-the-cuff speech to the 11,000-strong audience, said the government could plan the development of the country but without the diligence of workers, it would remain just that, a plan.

Abdullah said the government, employers and employees were dependent on each other and only if all three were strong and resilient could the country continue to develop.

He said Malaysia was no longer a country with low-production and labour costs, having to compete with countries such as China, India and Vietnam.

The government felt it was time for a change of approach to one of



The winners of the disabled male and female 'Tokoh' awards are Francis John Adam, a senior legal officer with the Sarawak Legal Department, and Hamidah Hassan, a Welfare Department assistant director.

building up more sophisticated and advanced industries, he said.

He said training should focus on producing multi-skilled workers who could draw higher salaries

from employers eager to hire them.

"Workers understand that good industrial relations allow for economic growth and greater invest-

ment, and, thus, today we are among the most progressive nations in terms of trade, having achieved a historic trade volume of RM1 trillion."

He added he wanted healthy, zero-accident workplaces and workers who were injured to be re-employed instead of being medically boarded out.

This year's Workers Day theme is "Productive Workers, A Competitive Nation".

Present at the Putra Stadium in Bukit Jalil were Human Resources Minister Datuk Seri Dr Fong Chan Onn and Deputy Minister Datuk Abdul Rahman Bakar as well as Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Mohd Sidek Hassan.

Abdullah presented awards to exemplary workers, employers and unions at the function.

At a press conference later, he said the Public Service Department was examining Cuepacs' request for a salary revision.