

Look after your workers
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By Masami Mustaza

INDUSTRIAL sector employers should look after the well-being of their workers as this would raise productivity, enabling the companies to reap profits and pay their workers better, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

"Please look after the welfare of the workers," he said when addressing management staff and workers at a meeting with industrial sector employees in Selangor during his visit to the Proton Centre of Excellence here yesterday.

He cited the example of how Sime Darby Plantations achieved better profits after it raised the salary of the estate workers of the government-linked company (GLC) by RM300 so that their income exceeded the poverty line.

"The executive director himself reported that this (better profits) was a result of raising their workers' salaries.

"Previously, Sime Darby Plantations had a history of high absenteeism. This was changed when workers became more motivated to work because their welfare was safeguarded."

Najib said workers, too, must be determined to raise productivity to help the companies achieve profits.

"If productivity increases and the company makes profits, we can even give bonuses."

Urging the people to continue supporting the government, he said much more would be done for workers as long as the Barisan Nasional government was given the mandate to rule the country.

"Trust us because we have the experience to lead this nation," he said to rousing cheers from the audience of more than 30,000.

Najib said others would promise all sorts of things to gain power, unlike the government, which delivered its promises, such as the RM100 aid to students and the RM500 to households earning less than RM3,000 a month under the 1Malaysia People's Aid (BR1M).

"Some people say we borrowed from the World Bank to pay for this. The last time we borrowed was in 1998.

"We didn't borrow from them even when we were going through the Asian financial crisis," he said, adding that this was due to Malaysia's resilient economy.

He said a reduction in the country's deficit from 5.6 per cent in 2009 to 5.4 per cent in 2010 and an increase in tax revenue to RM22 billion last year were proof of that.

He said this was a starting point for the Barisan Nasional-led government and should the people continue their support of its national transformation programmes, the country was on course to becoming a developed nation by 2020.

Najib hoped Proton could penetrate new markets with full electric vehicles with low-carbon emissions and best fuel efficiency.

He said he saw these as transformational steps that would turn Proton from a company which had seen some teething problems in the past to become a huge success under its management and adviser, former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He said a soon-to-be-launched Proton car was set to become the "transformation" for the national carmaker.

Dr Mahathir said Proton was the turning point for the country in becoming an industrial nation from an agricultural one.

"A quarter of a century ago, we were considered crazy to want to develop our own car. Our highest automotive skills at the time were limited to fixing batteries and tyres to cars.

"Now we have shown we are more than capable of manufacturing cars from scratch. Proton is sold even in global markets."

However, Dr Mahathir said a developed country was not measured by the per capita income of its people, but rather through the skills of its people.

To achieve that end, he said the nation's leaders must have a good relationship with its people to ensure that everyone, from worker to manager to investor, knew their roles in the development of the country.

Earlier, Najib, who is also Selangor Umno liaison body chairman, attended a closed-door meeting at the Shah Alam Convention Centre with 3,000 officers and staff of federal agencies in the state.

Present were Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Minister Datuk Seri Noh Omar, who is also deputy chairman of the Selangor Umno Liaison Body, and Selangor BN party leaders.

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