

**Hats off to nation's workers**  
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SERDANG: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak paid tribute to the nation's workers, calling them the backbone of the country whose welfare will not be ignored.

"The reality is that without dedicated workers and their loyalty to the country, we would not have been able to achieve the prosperity and development that we have," he said at the Human Resource Ministry's Workers Day gathering here yesterday.

Also present were Human Resource Minister Datuk Seri Dr S. Subramaniam and Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Mohd Sidek Hassan.

Najib also presented certificates of appreciation to MTUC, Cuepacs and the Malaysian Employers Federation for their cooperation and also handed out awards to outstanding workers and employers.

He said it had always been the Government's philosophy and agenda to protect the welfare of workers, citing the recent 7% to 13% pay increase for civil servants as an example.

"Ensuring the welfare of workers is a win-win situation as both employees and employers will benefit from it," he said, adding that it would increase productivity and revenue.

Using Sime Darby Plantation as an example, Najib said the company had achieved higher productivity after increasing the workers' salary by RM200.

The Prime Minister also urged private sector companies to move towards high value-added activities to enhance competitiveness and help increase workers' salaries.

"It is possible to increase salaries without jeopardising the economy. However, higher pay must come with increased productivity."

He said the implementation of the minimum wage that had been sought for 20 years, was also very significant as it had broken the "psychological barrier".

Najib said it was important for workers, employers and the Government to have a good relationship and stay united as the country continued with its transformation programme.

He also announced that MTUC and Cuepacs - the umbrella union bodies for the private and public sector respectively - would be given 10 Kedai Rakyat 1Malaysia to manage in honour of their contributions and help ease their members' burden.

MTUC president Khalid Atan said he was caught off-guard by Najib's announcement.

"I was really surprised. I did not expect it at all. But we are thankful and will make sure our members fully benefit from it," he said.

Cuepacs president Datuk Omar Osman thanked Najib for the KR1M allocation and said it would help the union look after the welfare of its members in a better way.

MTUC and Cuepacs would be given five stores each but the locations have not been determined yet.

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