

Malaysia: Mahathir has been Dirty, Dangerous and Difficult (3D) with the Workers

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On this year's auspicious May Day, Tun Mahathir made a statement to Malaysia workers. He told them; it is better for them to take a 3D job [1] then remaining jobless. What a profound concern from a Prime Minister who hardly gave a damn about workers. The worst message a worker can get on may day is - You better do a 3D job or prepared to be jobless.

Influx of Migrant labour and bargaining power

In the first place, many Malaysian workers work in 3D jobs in Singapore for the simple reason that the pay there is better. Many young graduates don't mind going to New Zealand to pluck apples because they get a better pay there. Now, would Mahathir also support for 3D jobs in Malaysia to be paid higher to attract the local workers? The problem is, on this aspect, Tun does not believe in the market forces. If we don't allow migrant labour in-flow, that would definitely make 3D jobs very demanding and it raise the wages automatically. Here the Government support cheap labour policy, then wages are distorted and kept low. Most employers want cheap labour, pay workers little benefit and cut cost. How do you achieve this is simple - flood the market with cheap labour.

Most of the Town Hall discussion held by the Human Resource Ministry has seen employers fighting hard for more migrant labour and asking for more flexibility in bringing in migrant labour. Why doesn't Mahathir announce on Workers Day, " From now onwards bosses must pay much higher salary if they want to employ 3 D jobs".

Minimum wage Act and keeping wages low

When minimum wage was introduced in 2012, the then Human Resource Minister Subramaniam said that we need to have minimum wages because market forces are not working and there is element of wages being suppressed. Very recently Bank Negara in its 2018 report said almost the same thing that Malaysia workers are paid less for the same productivity compared to other countries. The report claimed that that Malaysia's current wage productivity levels are misaligned.

What does Mahathir do here? Nothing!. While he did not want to introduce minimum wage act when he was the Prime Minister during in first 22 years;, now without a choice he reluctantly increased the minimum wages to what the employers wanted which was RM 1050 and way less than what was demanded by MTUC and PSM. Neither did he take the suggestion by the Technical committee of the Minimum Wage Council. Isn't this being dangerous and dirty to the workers? Why didn't Mahathir on workers day make an appeal to employers to increase the minimum wage and take back a smaller profit?

Unions under seize

What can one expect from a Prime Minister who declared the trade union as superfluous in 1982. Under Mahathir, Union rights have been further crippled. He ensured that electronic workers cannot form a national Union. He only allowed for in house Union to please investors from Japan and Korea. Only under Najib in 2009, did the cabinet decide to allow Electronics workers to form Unions in four regions.

In July 1990, Mahathir led government approved the formation of Malaysian Labour Organization (MLO) to weaken MTUC after MTUC took a controversial move by fielding its own candidates in the 1990 election. MLO was only dissolved after Zainal Rampak became an UMNO member in 1996. How dirty is this?

On December last year, Mahathir again warned Unions by saying that Unions should act as "bridges" between workers and employers and no longer function as facilitators of pickets to push their demands". This is said when Malaysian laws have been made such a way that Unions can never strike. Today Union membership in Malaysia is only 6%. Unions cannot play any role in safeguarding the workers or are better representing them because the Industrial laws and Trade union laws are more preventive than proactive in forming Unions.

Why didn't Mahathir on May day announce that Unions are important and they should be automatically allowed to be registered so that they can bargain a better deal for the workers?

Workers need to sacrifice, bosses get Tax haven

Why is it that workers need to do 3D jobs? Why is that workers should not be allowed to demand higher wages? Why didn't Mahathir focus his guns on the employers during May day but continue to bully and threaten the already weak Malaysia workers.

In November last year, when Hassan Karim(MP Pasair Gudang) asked in Parliament why is the government "afraid" of imposing or increasing taxes on the rich. Lim Guan Eng replied that the government is not considering implementing these wealth tax, inheritance tax, capital gains tax and higher corporate tax because it does not want to shock the capital market.

Why not Mahathir make an appeal to the bosses to pay more taxes for the well being of the nation. Why not Mahathir announce this bold step on May Day that the Bosses have to pay a higher tax to ensure more Malaysian get a better standard of living.

Why is Tun being difficult with the workers and not the bosses? Why must workers continue to receive indecent wages and at the same time, their rights to protest are disabled. Multinational companies are given tax havens but poor Malaysia workers are told to do 3D jobs.

Hundreds of years ago, the historical battle of workers won them 8 hours of job. Today with so much

of advancement in technology, science and health care. Yet we see the large number of the population in every nation fighting for decent wages, better health care, education and housing. The income gap in the world is widening while workers today work 12 hours to make ends meet. It is sad that in the 21 century, our Prime Minister is asking us to do 3D jobs are become jobless. Yes indeed it is a dangerous, dirty and difficult world for the many while the few plunder on this.

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P.S.

- THINK LEFT PSM on MAY 3, 2019:
<https://thinkleft.net/2019/05/03/mahathir-has-been-dirty-dangerous-and-difficult-3d-with-the-workers/>
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Footnotes

[1] “Dirty, dangerous and demeaning” (often “dirty, dangerous and demanding” or “dirty, dangerous and difficult”), also known as the 3Ds, is an American neologism derived from the Asian concept.