

MTUC-MAHATHIR
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JOHOR BAHRU, AUG 25 (BERNAMA) -- THE MALAYSIAN TRADES UNION CONGRESS (MTUC) WANTS THE GOVERNMENT TO HAVE +HEART-TO-HEART+ TALKS WITH LABOUR LEADERS AT LEAST ONCE EVERY SIX MONTHS TO DISCUSS WORKER PROBLEMS AND CURRENT ISSUES AFFECTING THE COUNTRY.

ITS DEPUTY PRESIDENT, ENCIK ZAINAL RAMPAK, SAID THAT SINCE THE GOVERNMENT WAS WILLING TO LISTEN TO VIEWS OF EMPLOYERS, IT WAS ONLY FAIR THAT IT ALSO GAVE THE LABOUR MOVEMENT SIMILAR HEARING.

+WE FEEL THAT IF THE GOVERNMENT IS READY TO ACCEPT THE VIEWS OF MANagements ON THE ECONOMIC RECESSION AND INFLATION, IT SHOULD ALSO SEEK THE VIEWS AND SUGGESTIONS OF UNIONS BECAUSE OUR MEMBERS ARE LOYAL TO THE COUNTRY AND HAVE GIVEN THEIR BLOOD, SWEAT AND TEARS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTRY,+ HE ADDED.

HE WAS CLOSING A THREE-DAY LEADERSHIP COURSE HERE YESTERDAY.

IN THIS MATTER, HE BLAMED DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD FOR WHAT HE CLAIMED WAS THE PRIME MINISTER'S RELUCTANCE TO MEET LABOUR LEADERS TO DISCUSS LABOUR PROBLEMS SINCE ASSUMING THE NUMBER ONE POST IN THE COUNTRY ABOUT SIX YEARS AGO. -- MORE

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HE CLAIMED THAT MTUC HAD NEVER BEEN GIVEN THE CHANCE TO HAVE HEART-TO-HEART TALKS WITH THE PRIME MINISTER, WHO, HE SAID, HAD CONSISTENTLY REJECTED ALL SUCH REQUESTS.

ENCIK ZAINAL FURTHER CLAIMED THAT REGISTERED LETTERS TO DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR FOR APPOINTMENTS NEVER GOT ANY REPLY.

HE SAID LEADERS OF OTHER COUNTRIES SUCH AS PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN OF THE UNITED STATES MET LABOUR LEADERS EVERY THREE OR SIX MONTHS TO DISCUSS WAYS OF FIGHTING INFLATION AND IMPROVING PRODUCTIVITY AS WELL AS CURRENT ISSUES AND OTHER PROBLEMS AFFECTING NATIONAL INTERESTS.

EXPRESSING REGRET OVER THE MTUC'S REPEATED FAILURES TO MEET THE PRIME MINISTER, ENCIK ZAINAL SAID THE CONGRESS HAD OFTEN INVITED THE PRIME MINISTER TO OPENINGS OF BUILDINGS AND UNION MEETINGS BUT +UNFORTUNATELY ALL INVITATION CARDS WERE NEVER REPLIED.+

HE REMINDED THAT THE MTUC WAS A STRONG AND INFLUENTIAL ORGANISATION WITH 350,000 MEMBERS AND IGNORING IT WAS +NOT LOGICAL.+ -- MORE

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ENCIK ZAINAL SAID THE MTUC SPECIAL MEMORANDUM TO THE PRIME MINISTER SENT MAY 29 LAST YEAR CONTAINING PROPOSALS ON AMENDMENTS TO THE LABOUR ACT WAS NEVER ACKNOWLEDGED TO TODAY.

IT WAS INSTEAD REFERRED TO THE LABOUR MINISTRY AND THE MINISTER CONCERNED HAD NOT SO FAR TAKEN ANY ACTION ON THE MATTER.

ENCIK ZAINAL EXPLAINED THAT THE PURPOSE OF SEEKING A MEETING WITH THE PRIME MINISTER WAS TO DISCUSS NOT JUST SALARY CLAIMS BUT ALSO CURRENT ISSUES AND VIEWS OF UNION LEADERS ON THE ECONOMIC SLOWDOWN AND WAYS OF OVERCOMING IT.

HE SAID THE PRIME MINISTER HAD ONCE TOLD LABOUR LEADERS IN THE COUNTRY NOT TO PUBLICISE THEIR GROUSES TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD TO SAFEGUARD THE COUNTRY'S IMAGE.

HOWEVER, IF THE GOVERNMENT ITSELF DID NOT PROVIDE THE LABOUR MOVEMENT WITH THE OPPORTUNITY AND FORUM TO VOICE ITS GRIEVANCES, HOW ELSE COULD LABOUR LEADERS RAISE THE PROBLEMS OF WORKERS? HE ASKED.

-- BERNAMA

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