

Accept rotation, MTUC told

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KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysian Trades Union Congress should end its claim as the country's sole workers' representative to the annual International Labour Organisation (ILO) conference, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

He said the MTUC should instead accept the normal rotation with Cuepacs as the workers' delegate to the yearly ILO conference in Geneva.

Speaking to reporters after opening the German-Malaysian Institute here, he said not all unions were members of MTUC.

"MTUC does not represent all workers in the public sector which is why it has to accept the fact that it should follow the agreement to rotate its representation at ILO," he said.

This year is Cuepacs' turn to be the Malaysian workers' delegate to the conference which starts on June 7 while MTUC and Malaysian Labour Organisation (MLO)

are the alternate delegates.

Dr Mahathir said if MTUC were to quarrel over the issue at the ILO conference, it would not only tarnish the country's image but affect its economy.

"MTUC does not realise that if it collaborates with international labour unions (to raise local labour issues), it would not only jeopardise our exports but cause hardship to local workers."

MTUC has contended that being the largest labour body in the country and based on the ILO constitution it should be the sole workers' delegate to the annual conference.

Miffed by the Human Resources Ministry's decision to pick Cuepacs as the country's delegate for the conference, MTUC said it would also proceed with plans to raise the country's unresolved labour issues again at the conference's credentials committee.

Meanwhile, MTUC secretary-general G. Rajasekaran gave an assurance that the move to refer the matter to the credentials committee would not jeopardise the country's exports and cause

hardship to workers.

"Our primary interest is to protect the well-being of workers in this country as the ILO is a *bona fide* labour organisation," said Rajasekaran.

He said the government in 1982 decided to alternate the seat between Cuepacs and MTUC.

"We represent workers from all sectors: private, public, statutory bodies and even the agricultural sector," he added.

MLO secretary-general K. Sanmugam said all parties should abide by the wishes of the prime minister.

However, MLO wanted to be considered for future conferences, he said.

"Everyone should be given the opportunity to voice out issues affecting workers in this country at the ILO," he said.

Sanmugam said he hoped the other labour organisations would show their maturity by holding discussions to achieve a common goal.

Cuepacs secretary-general A.H. Ponniah said under the given scenario, "MTUC should make up and hold discussions."