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PM-Postcards

ESTATE WORKERS SEEK PM'S SUPPORT FOR MONTHLY WAGES

KLANG, May 1 (Bernama) -- Estate workers from 1,500 estates nationwide will collect 500,000 postcards to be handed over to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad seeking his support for a RM750 minimum monthly wage.

The Estate Workers' Support Committee, an ad hoc panel set up to fight for estate workers monthly wages, hopes to collect the cards in two years.

A spokesman of the committee A. Sivarajan said the postcards would list out their claims and seek government's help to draw up guidelines on wage negotiations between plantation companies and workers unions.

Their claims are;

- \* Minimum RM750 monthly pay;
- \* Minimum RM50 annual increment;
- \* Minimum one-month bonus;
- \* Retirement benefits of RM1,000 for each year of service and;
- \* Alternative housing and compensation for displaced workers when estates are sold or acquired for development purposes.

"We believe the government can draw up the guidelines for wage negotiations to achieve our claims," he told reporters at a Workers' Day gathering in Boon Hean Estate, Bukit Rajah, here.

While plantation companies rake in big profits annually, Sivarajan said estate workers were denied annual salary increments and bonus.

They are paid meagre wages rendering them unable to save or invest, he said.

The committee also proposed that estates be placed under the purview of the Rural Development Ministry to enable the workers to enjoy piped water supply, electricity and tarred roads, he said.

Sivarajan said the committee collected some 300,000 postcards in its previous campaign which were sent to the Prime Minister's Department on April 1, 1995.

As a result of the campaign, all estates below 400ha were placed under the Rural Development ministry, he added. -- BERNAMA

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