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Govt, bosses and workers to hold informal meeting

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IN A move to further strengthen industrial relations in the country, the Human Resources Ministry will organise an informal gathering between the Government, employers and the workers within the third quarter of the year.

Its minister Lim Ah Lek said the tripartite informal gathering will serve as "an informal brainstorming session where the three parties can talk about any problems in the country.

"We will organise a Family Day and games for the three parties," Lim told reporters after visiting a construction site in Kajang yesterday.

He said the ministry's Trade Union Department will also hold courses for unionists to further improve the unions' administration.

At present, the National Labour Advisory Council (NLAC) meeting is the only tripartite meeting.

It is a formal meeting where representatives from the Government, workers and the employers discuss labour-related issues.

Lim said the informal tripartite gathering initiated by the ministry is different from the NLAC meeting, which is formal in nature.

"I haven't spoken to the union leaders and employers representatives.

"It is my idea and I hope both the parties will be receptive to it because the informal gathering will strengthen the tripartism in the country," he said.

"The Government will initiate more get-together with the workers and the employers, apart from the NLAC meeting," he added.

Lim said even Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has invited union representatives to accompany him during his many visits overseas.

Malaysia is respected by developed countries because of its prevailing harmonious industrial relations, he said.

Lim also said his door is always open to the unions.

"Of late, many unions have come and see me, rather than talk about their problems to the media," he said.

He also called upon unions and employers to suggest ideas to strengthen tripartism in the country.

Meanwhile, the Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) welcome the proposal, describing it as a good move.

"We can raise any issue informally during the gathering and then we can bring the matter to the formal meeting (NLAC)," MTUC president Zainal Rampak told Business Times.

Zainal said the place for the gathering is not important as long the three parties can discuss informally.

On another development, Lim said he will be going to Geneva next week to attend the on-going meeting of the International Labour Organisation (ILO)'s governing body.

The ILO governing body meeting is a normal meeting which discuss the policy-making issues.

"The workers issues will only be discussed during the annual ILO conference in June, which is held in conjunction with the second ILO governing body meeting," he said, adding that the ILO governing body meets three times a year -in March, June and November.

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