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Estate-Workers

MIC CALLS FOR A REVIEW OF LABOUR ACT INVOLVING ESTATE WORKERS

KOTA BAHARU, July 18 (Bernama) -- MIC today urged the government to review the Labour Act and the existing regulations to protect the welfare and future of estate workers, should their employers sell their plantations for commercial use.

Its president, Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said most estate workers who lost their jobs after the estates were sold could be regarded as having been "victimised" as they were paid only 22-day wages for each year of employment.

"This is unreasonable and we must amend the laws," said Samy, adding that he would raise the issue with the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and the Cabinet, shortly.

Samy Vellu, who is the Works Minister, was speaking to reporters after opening the Kelantan MIC delegates conference here.

According to Samy Vellu, the compensation received by the workers was inadequate while the plantation owners reaped huge profits from the sale.

"Recently, I was informed that a plantation owner made profits about 1,400 times from the original purchase price of his estate, and in Selangor an estate land is sold about RM500,000 to RM1 million per acre," he said.

Based on the 22-day wages formula a worker after working for 35 years would only get about RM14,000, hardly enough for him to pay for a house deposit, he said.

Samy said the MIC was now studying the proposed amendments to the law to ensure the welfare of the estate workers were adequately protected. He said he would raise the matter at the party general assembly next month before referring it to the Prime Minister.

Meanwhile, there was a commotion at the MIC meeting here when some 40 placard-carrying party members from eight Kuala Krai branches staged a peaceful demonstration outside the meeting hall shortly after Samy Vellu arrived.

The eight branches are Tako Estate, Pasir Kelang, Kuala Pertang, Guchil, Ladang Kerilla, Manek Urai, Pasir Gajah and S. Kandasamy Estate, Pahi.

Their spokesman M. Amavasy who is also the Pasir Kelang MIC branch vice chairman said the protest was made because the eight branches never had a meeting but the annual statements were prepared by their leaders. --

BERNAMA

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