

17 DEC 1998

Lim-Holiday

AMENDMENTS TO COMPEL EMPLOYERS TO GRANT SPECIAL HOLIDAYS

LANGKAWI, Dec 17 (Bernama) -- The Employment Act 1955 will be amended to make it compulsory for employers to observe special holidays declared by the government, Human Resources Minister Datuk Lim Ah Lek said today.

The ministry, through the Labour Department, was taking steps to amend the Act, he told reporters after opening the triennial delegates conference of the National Union of Plantation Workers (NUPW) here.

"At the moment we can only appeal to employers to give such holidays, which are rarely declared, because there is no law to compel them," he said.

NUPW secretary-general G. Sankaran, in his speech earlier, had urged the government to act against employers who did not observe the public holiday that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad declared to mark the country's success in last September's 16th Commonwealth Games.

Meanwhile, Lim said estate owners should get subsidised low-cost units for their workers affected by land conversion or allocate them land lots with basic infrastructure.

The ministry would forward a proposal paper on this to the Cabinet, he said when commenting on the plight of estate workers displaced by the conversion of estate land for other uses.

An NUPW report said over 2,000 estate workers in the peninsula had lost their accommodation after estate land was converted for other uses.

Lim also said certain non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were instigating estate workers to press for demands without knowing the actual situation in estates.

In his speech, Lim advised workers unions not to adopt negative approaches like resorting to industrial action as this would be detrimental to all parties.

A harmonious and stable industrial climate was essential to help in the country's economic recovery, he said.

"An aggressive and confrontational approach would only create industrial tension and worsen the economic problems facing our country," he said.

He said any problems on salary and conditions of employment should be resolved through discussions.

Lim said unions were welcome to bring up problems on workers' welfare to the management but they should do it through the proper channels.

He urged unions and the management to work together to ensure the success of human resource and skills training programmes for workers.

-- BERNAMA

NH YBY