

11/06/1998

Mapa and NUPW working on new terms

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - Work on a new collective agreement between estate workers and Malaysian Agricultural Producers Association (Mapa) has begun after the old one expired last month, National Union of Plantation Workers (NUPW) executive secretary A. Navamukundan said today. He said the union had forwarded its memorandum of claims on salary and other benefits to Mapa last month and were waiting a reply.

"As usual we are asking for better terms and conditions for employment and living," he said. Each collective agreement is for a period of three years.

Navamukundan was responding to a query about the status of a group of plantation workers who staged a peaceful gathering outside the gates of the Prime Minister's Department requesting a meeting with Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to discuss monthly wages in place of their current daily wages.

A letter was handed to an officer from the Prime Minister's office at the gates.

The group calling itself the Malaysian Support Committee for the Plantation Community claimed that plantation workers were being victimised by plantation managements through a low daily-wage structure while other benefits like annual wage increment and bonus were not forthcoming.

The group also claimed that Mapa and NUPW were unable to work out a "good" wage structure despite having met many times.

Its spokesman A. Sivarajan said plantation workers get an average of RM500 per month and were asking for a monthly minimum of RM750, a RM50 annual increment, a minimum of one month's annual bonus and retirement benefits.

Navamukundan said NUPW would strive to get the best terms and conditions for the workers.

"We cannot conclude a collective agreement through the Press or in the streets."

Navamukundan said there were three categories of plantation workers who were daily-rated, piece-rated and monthly-rated.

On claims by the group that they had to pay for electricity and water supplies, he said workers were charged for any amount used above a free-quantum.

(END)