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MTUC-Message/BM

MINIMUM WAGE TOP OF MTUC STRUGGLE FOR 1999

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 31 (Bernama) -- Efforts to restructure the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) and to implement a minimum wage of RM1,200 rank high on the agenda of the Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) for 1999.

MTUC president Senator Zainal Rampak said these two issues were among nine contained in the Langkawi Declaration of April 1997 which was adopted by the MTUC.

MTUC would also continue to champion the absolute rights and interests of workers, the freedom to have unions, freedom of expression, and adopt a more progressive attitude to improve the economic well-being of workers, he said in a New Year message here.

He said MTUC would continue to press the Finance Ministry to restructure the EPF so that it could give better dividends in line with its position as the country's biggest financial institution with assets exceeding RM140 billion.

On the minimum monthly salary of RM1,200, he said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad suggested that this could be implemented once the country's economy has recovered.

Zainal, who was recently appointed a Senator, said the minimum wage would give families of workers better living standards and encourage them to save.

He said other matters in the Langkawi Declaration meriting urgent attention were calls for the government to recognise and implement the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention of 1987 and for the full utilisation of the Human Resource Development Fund for training workers.

MTUC also pledged to play an active role in consumer issues and to encourage affiliates to increase membership to one million by the year 2000.

Employers should consider unions as friends and continue the Service Termination Scheme, he said.

He said economic problems in Malaysia and other countries in the region in 1998 had caused 30 million people to lose their jobs and their families to suffer.

Workers should learn from the experience of neighbouring countries and continue to work hard and be united in rehabilitating and developing the country's economy, he said.

-- BERNAMA

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