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MTUC gives backing on CIQ issue

PETALING JAYA, Sun. - The Malaysian Trades Union Congress said today it fully supports the Government decision on the Tanjong Pagar issue and called on Singapore to respect Malaysia's rights.

Its president Zainal Rampak said the Singapore authorities should have been more sensitive before they decided to shift the Customs, Immigration and Quarantine (CIQ) from Tanjong Pagar to Woodlands.

In a unilateral move on Aug 1, Singapore shifted its CIQ checkpoint for train services to Woodlands from Tanjong Pagar.

Malaysia has maintained its facilities at the Tanjong Pagar railway station.

"The republic must respect Malaysia as a good neighbour as the latter has done with regard to stationing Singapore officials at several designated water treatment plants, for the use of the lighthouse at Pulau Batu Putih and water supply," he said, adding that MTUC was very perturbed over the issue.

Zainal said the Singapore authorities should also respect the land lease of 999 years to Keretapi Tanah Melayu Bhd.

He also reminded the Singapore authorities to return the Central Provident Fund monies which were contributed by Malaysian workers if they had already left the republic.

"MTUC cannot understand why Singapore only allows those from Sabah and Sarawak to withdraw their CPF and discriminates against those from Peninsular Malaysia," he added.

Zainal said as the Employees Provident Fund Act had recently been amended to allow Singaporeans to withdraw their EPF if they decided to leave Malaysia, he asked: "I see no reason why the Singapore Government cannot do the same to allow Malaysians to withdraw their CPF."

He added that Singapore should do so, without the Malaysian Government having to tell them.

In Johor Baru, the Johor Indian Business Association pledged undivided support for Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's firm stand on the Tanjong Pagar issue.

Its vice-president R. Rajkumar said the issue was raised by Singapore, adding "the ball is now in the republic's court".

In a statement issued today, Rajkumar said: "In the absence of a formal agreement, it is wrong on their part to insist on the shift to Woodlands.

"Their action certainly speaks of arrogance. So much hurt and confusion have been aroused because of their action."

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