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Union-Support (Round-up)

MTUC, CUEPACS TO HELP GOVERNMENT REVERSE DOWNTURN

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 17 (Bernama) -- The Congress of Unions of Employees in the Public and Civil Services (Cuepacs) and the Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) the umbrella bodies for more than 1.4 million workers from various sectors today pledged continued support for the government in its efforts to reverse the ringgit's depreciation and the economic downturn.

To prove that such support was not mere empty talk, the two congresses had vowed to channell aid to the government to overcome the present problems.

Cuepacs President Abdul Aziz Mohd Sultan, who assumed leadership of the 650,000 congress yesterday, said cuepacs would not make any claims at present when the country was going through economic hardship.

"We will not make any claims at present because of the economic setback. We are postponing our claims not withdrawing them. We will wait for economic recovery," he told TV3's Malaysia Hari Ini programme.

MTUC President MTUC Zainal Rampak said the MTUC would ask its 750,000 members from 181 affiliates to maintain industrial harmony and save.

"At the same time we will persuade corporate leaders to be concerned not only about the country but also about the problems being faced by workers," he said.

Zainal said if workers were paid fair wages it would enhance purchasing power in the country.

He said the MTUC would strive to heed the government's call to increase productivity and improve the quality of goods to encourage the people to buy locally produced goods.

Cuepacs and the MTUC also pledged to help the government explain the present economic problems to the people.

"Cuepacs leaders were recently invited by the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister to a briefing on the present economic problems facing the country," Abdul Aziz said.

The MTUC also advised the government to be cautious when getting advice from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) so that such advice would not bring hardship to the country, people and the working class.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had on numerous occasions stressed that Malaysia did not need IMF assistance.

Dr Mahathir's view was reflected by IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus who during his visit to Kuala Lumpur yesterday said Malaysia did not need IMF programmes as its economy was strong and its policies particularly its economic restructuring policy were sound.

Camdessus said the IMF's advice and technical assistance, however, were available to Malaysia at any time.

Zainal said the government's decision not to seek IMF assistance was a wise move and had saved Malaysia from the clutches and tutelage of the IMF.

"We have seen the sufferings of the countries in Africa and Latin America which had borrowed from the IMF with its tough conditions and were now saddled with the debt burden. Efforts to reduce the poverty in these countries have also not borne fruit," he said. -- BERNAMA

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