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Tougher action against errant bosses proposed

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THE Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) has proposed amendments to the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) Act 1991 which will enable the board to take action against employers who fail to submit their workers' contributions.

MTUC president Zainal Rampak said a proposal was made to the EPF board to charge employers for criminal breach of trust if they fail to make monthly contributions to the EPF.

Under the current Act, Zainal said employers are only fined a small amount compared with the breach of trust which carries a mandatory jail sentence.

EPF can also take court action against a company and seal its premises and liquidate its assets for failing to make contributions.

"The current Act does not seem to deter companies from not making contributions. We feel tougher measures need to be taken and have proposed amendments to the EPF board.

"We hope it will be implemented once the board has discussed the issue," Zainal told reporters after witnessing the opening of the International Metalworkers' Federation regional office in Petaling Jaya yesterday.

Zainal said the EPF board will take some time to consider the proposal.

Earlier, Zainal said the National Labour Advisory Council will be meeting the next two weeks to discuss the implementation of the National Retrenchment Scheme.

The proposal for the scheme, he said, was forwarded to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad two months ago and Dr Mahathir has given the green light to the Minister of Human Resources Datuk Lim Ah Lek to discuss the issue further.

Under the proposed scheme, both employers and employees have to contribute RM1 monthly to a fund which will be managed by the Social Security Organisation (Sosco). The fund will then be used to pay allowances to retrenched workers registered with the Manpower Department.

"Workers who are unable to find a job similar to their previous one three months after retrenchment will be given an allowance. However, workers who refuse jobs offered to them will not receive such benefits," he said.

The idea of a social safety net, he said, was forwarded to the Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers (FMM) who is also keen on the idea and has formed a working committee to look into it.

Meanwhile, International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF) general secretary Marcello Malentacchi said the Malaysian Government did not impose any conditions on the federation when it proposed to set up a regional office in Kuala Lumpur.

"The approval for the regional office for South-East Asia was given without any conditions. The federation did not compromise on its principles to fight for the rights of workers; however, we would like to assure the Government that we will respect and pay attention to the rules and laws in this country," Malentacchi said, adding that the federation's objective is to organise workers into unions.

The Geneva-based IMF has 20 million members worldwide.

Malentacchi said the Government and workers unions should not focus too much and argue on the high unemployment rates or figures as what is more important is the creation of jobs.

"Everyone is too busy to find a solution to unemployment under the current crisis facing the South-East Asian countries.

"I believe unions should look at the issue in a more optimistic manner by giving a direction to move forward in this situation. This will give more hope to the workers," he said.

In his speech, Malentacchi also touched on currency speculators who are controlling about 85 per cent of the annual currency transactions but do not create jobs for the world.

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