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Better times coming for estate workers

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - Estate workers will have better living standards and monthly salaries if MIC's proposals are accepted by the Government.

The proposals in a study report entitled "Estate Workers Towards The New Millennium" suggest immediate measures to fix monthly salaries at between RM900 and RM1,000 while awaiting structuring of a new salary scheme.

The salary range was based on current rubber prices and provisions in the agreement signed between the Malayan Agriculture Producers' Association (Mapa) and the National Union of Plantation Workers (NUPW).

The agreement stipulates estate managements must produce 1,500kg of latex per hectare a year.

MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu is expected to present the 75-page report prepared by plantation experts to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the Primary Industries Ministry and the Human Resources Ministry.

The party also proposed estate workers be recognised as the main target group under the Eighth Malaysia Plan and the Third Outlook Perspective Plan.

Areas to be given attention are:

- * Providing power and piped water supplies to all Mapa-member estates and non-members;
- * Giving priority to estate workers in low-cost house ownership;
- * Upgrading basic amenities in estates and Tamil schools, installing the latest facilities such as computers linked to all schools;
- * Better accessibility to medical facilities with the government drawing up and implementing a health insurance scheme; and,
- * Offering skills training to displaced estate workers to enable them to venture into new fields.

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