

18 JUL 1999

Fund-Demonstration

500 DEMONSTRATE OVER FUND'S DISSOLUTION

KUALA LUMPUR, July 18 (Bernama) -- Some 500 people today staged a demonstration at the entrance of Parliament house in protest of the government's move to dissolve the South Indian Labour Fund.

The protesters, some of whom came from Kedah and Negeri Sembilan, dispersed after about an hour on the orders of police.

Sentul OCPD ACP Abdul Hadi Mahmud said the situation was under control as the demonstration was peaceful.

"We were assured by them that the demonstration had nothing to do with opposition parties, and they abided by the conditions set by us," he told reporters at the scene.

Malaysian Tamil Youth Bell Club president RRM Krishnan, who was among those who led the demonstration, said the protesters wanted the government to reconsider its move to dissolve the fund.

He said he would try to meet Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tomorrow to hand over a memorandum on the matter.

Yesterday, Dr Mahathir said the opposition to the fund's dissolution was political and aimed at attacking the MIC.

He said there was no need for the fund, set up by the British, as the Indian community in the country was well looked after by the government.

Meanwhile, the Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) today expressed shock over the move to dissolve the fund.

Its president Senator Zainal Rampak said the MTUC had suggested five years ago that the fund be renamed Malaysian Labour Fund Board and retained in the interests of plantation workers in the country.

The money from the fund could be used to finance the education of estate workers' children and build more old folks' homes for former workers, he told Bernama.

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