

Don't include CPF issue in talks with S'pore: MTUC

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By SREEREMA BANOO

THE Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) is against the inclusion of the Central Provident Fund (CPF) withdrawal issue in the package of issues to be discussed between Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his Singaporean counterpart Goh Chok Tong.

MTUC president Senator Zainal Rampak said the CPF issue need not be part of the package of issues identified by Singapore as it is not political.

Since it does not in any way involve government funds, the Singapore Government could instead issue an administrative directive to the CPF to release the

savings upon receiving applications for withdrawals, rather than make them wait until they are 55 years of age.

He said he would write to Dr Mahathir requesting that CPF be separately discussed. A copy of this letter will also be given to Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin and Human Resources Minister Datuk Fong Chan Onn.

"We have been informed that the CPF issue has been included in the package of five issues to be discussed between both prime ministers... it is the issue of contributions by Malaysians working in Singapore, why include it in the package?" he asked.

He told this to reporters

yesterday after submitting the MTUC's written request to the Singapore premier with a copy to the Finance Minister Richard Wu, urging the Singapore Government to permit Peninsular Malaysia workers returning home upon completing their employment contracts to withdraw in full their CPF savings.

The request was handed to Singapore High Commissioner K. Kesavapany at the High Commission.

Zainal who sits on the International Labour Organisation (ILO) governing body, said the matter will be referred to the organisation only as a last resort.

"If we refer the matter to the ILO, it will affect Singapore's image as it will be

called to face the ILO committee on application of standards," he said.

There is a provision under the ILO Convention which allows workers or unions to lodge complaints against any country which violates workers' rights.

There are more than 60,000 workers from the peninsula employed in Singapore.

Workers from Peninsular Malaysia returning home upon completion of their contracts are not permitted to withdraw their contributions from the CPF until they reach the age of 55.

However, this condition does not apply to workers from East Malaysia and those from foreign countries.