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Don't panic over wage proposal, employers told

Kamarul Yunus

EMPLOYERS and the Government should not "press the panic button" over the Malaysian Trades Union Congress' (MTUC) proposed minimum wage of RM1,200 as the amount asked is not final, MTUC deputy president Mohamed Shafie B.P. Mammal said.

Instead, he said employers should view the proposal positively and provide amicable solution to the issue in a meeting between the employers, including the Government and union leaders.

"We are not threatening employers to implement the minimum wage of RM1,200 immediately.

"If we want to threat the employers, we would have done it three or four years ago when the country was facing economic crisis.

"But at that time, the workers had sacrificed by not demanding for increase in salaries," he told newsmen in response to various reactions from some quarters regarding MTUC's survey on poverty-line wages in Petaling Jaya yesterday.

If workers were willing to sacrifice, Mohamed Shafie said the MTUC does not see why the minimum wages cannot be implemented when the country's economy has improved.

He chided remarks by Deputy Human Resources Minister Dr Abdul Latif Ahmad that the MTUC's survey on the poverty-line wages was outdated, stressing that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad himself has suggested the minimum wage at RM1,200 during a meeting with MTUC leaders on August 7 1998.

"At that time, we only proposed a minimum wage of RM600 based on our survey on poverty-line wages in 1995 and 1996. Years have passed and the price of goods are increasing while the minimum wage of some workers have been below RM600 for quite a long time.

"Thus, it is timely for the Government to introduce a minimum wage of RM1,200 since there are already signs of economic recovery. But it does not mean that the minimum wage is fixed at RM1,200... it could be more or less," he said.

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