

08 MAR 2000

Samy-Report

MIC SUBMITS REPORT ON ESTATE WORKERS TO CABINET

KUALA LUMPUR, March 8 (Bernama) -- Works Minister and MIC President Datuk Seri S.Samy Vellu today submitted to the Cabinet a detailed report outlining the MIC's proposals for improving the lot of rubber and oil palm estate workers.

The proposals included the implementation of a monthly wage system.

Samy Vellu said although the wage issue was confined to rubber tappers, the party felt that oil palm harvesters should also be paid fixed monthly wages.

"There should be a benchmark for tappers and the harvesters, but not necessarily the same benchmark," he told reporters when unveiling the report at his office here.

He said tappers were getting between RM800 and RM1,000 a month, while the harvesters received between RM800 and RM1,400 depending on the harvest.

"If the harvest is good they get more and if it is not good because of the weather, they get paid less," he said.

Last Friday, the Malaysia Agricultural Producers Association (MAPA) had agreed in principle to implement the monthly wage system.

Their decision came two days after Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad directed the Human Resource Ministry to undertake a study on the matter which led to the formation of a committee under the ministry.

Samy Vellu said the committee should also take into account the problems faced by oil palm estate workers.

He said the report was a "very useful tool" for the committee which would be headed by the Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Administration, Universiti Malaya.

The report entitled "Kajian Pekerja Ladang ke Alaf Baru" was prepared by the party's "Yayasan Strategik Sosial".

Among its recommendation was that the plantation workers ought to be included as key target group in the 8th Malaysian Plan and the third Outline Perspective Plan.

Under this plan, areas which should be identified and be given special consideration were:

* Electrification schemes and piped water for all households in all MAPA and non-MAPA plantations.

* House ownership in all low cost housing schemes with priority accorded and a certain percentage reserved for plantation workers.

* Immediate improvement of infrastructure facilities and new school buildings equipped with the latest state-of-the-art amenities.

Dr Mahathir had directed the Primary Industries Ministry to conduct a study on the effects to the economy of converting rubber estates into oil palm estates, he said.

The Prime Minister felt that there was still a high demand for rubber and rubber products like furniture in the international market, Samy Vellu said.

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