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MTUC-CPF

MTUC WANTS CPF ISSUE TAKEN OFF MALAYSIA-SINGAPORE PACKAGE

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 20 (Bernama) -- The Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) wants the withdrawal of contributions by Malaysians from Singapore's Central Provident Fund (CPF) be taken off the package of five bilateral issues being discussed between the two countries.

MTUC president Senator Zainal Rampak said the CPF issue should be negotiated separately since it was not a political issue but one concerning the welfare of Malaysians who once worked in the republic.

"The CPF issue needs to be resolved the soonest possible, it has remained outstanding for far too long," he told reporters after delivering to Acting Singapore High Commissioner to Malaysia Chin Hock Seng here today a letter on the issue addressed to Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong.

"If the CPF issue is discussed as a package, then it is unlikely it would be resolved soon."

He said a similar letter was addressed to Singapore Finance Minister Richard Hu and that the MTUC would also write to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for the CPF issue to be discussed separately with a copy to be sent to Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin and Human Resources Minister Datuk Dr Fong Chan Onn.

On Dec 17, 1998, Dr Mahathir and Goh agreed to resolve as a package five outstanding bilatetal issues.

Apart from the CPF issue, the others are the relocation of the Malaysian Customs, Immigration and Quarantine (CIQ) facility in Tanjong Pagar, Singapore, Malaysian owned railway land in Singapore, Singapore's request for a new water agreement and use of Malaysian airspace by the republic's air force.

Zainal said the MTUC had received many complaints from Malaysians in the peninsula who once worked in Singapore of problems in withdrawing their CPF contributions.

Zainal said he was informed by Chin that Singapore laws stipulate Malaysians from the peninsula can only withdraw the CPF contributions after they reached 50 years of age and has not worked in the republic for two successive years after reaching 50.

Malaysians from Sabah and Sarawak are allowed to withdraw their CPF contributions once they stopped working and leave Singapore, he said.

Zainal said he was also informed that from August last year, it was no longer compulsory for foreign workers in Singapore to contribute to the CPF.

He said there were at least 60,000 Malaysians from the peninsula who once worked in Singapore and now had to wait until they are more than 50 years old in order to withdraw their CPF contributions, estimated at RM3 billion.

Asked if the issue would be taken up with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Zainal said the MTUC preferred it to be resolved in the spirit of Asean solidarity.

"Taking the CPF issue to the ILO will be the last resort," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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