

Crack in the ranks

SUN 11 APR 2001

MTUC affiliates come out in support of and against decision to picket EPF offices

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues: Just three days after a unanimous vote by the MTUC working committee to picket against the Employees Provident Fund, a crack has appeared among the ranks.

Two affiliates issued statements today one urging the congress general council to reject the decision to

hold protests on May 12 at all EPF offices and the other supporting it.

The 7,000-strong Malayan Technical Services Union (MTSU), through its general secretary Samuel Devadasan, is calling for sensibility to prevail.

"As mature labour leaders, let us bury sentiments and political beliefs and work towards an economically and politically strong and stable Malaysia," he said.

"This will ensure that workers reap the bountiful harvest."

He added: "MTSU calls upon the general council of the MTLJC, which will meet on April 20, to reject the working committee's proposal to picket."

On Friday, the committee, in which MTSU was represented by its president Yusof Harmain Shah, decided on the picket to register its displeasure over EPF's "lack of sensitivity to contributors' interest".

Devadasan also described as "really unbelievable and shocking" the statement by MTUC deputy sec-

retary-general Abdul Halim Mansor that the general council had last November given the committee the mandate to decide on the picket.

Ahdul Halim said yesterday that there was need for the general council to endorse the decision.

However, MTUC president Zainal Rampak said yesterday that the general council will decide whether or not to proceed with the picket.

On Sunday, Prime Minister

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Timber workers all for picket

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Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad advised the MTUC not to create new problems, saying picketing is not the way to resolve issues.

The 13,000-strong Timber Industry Employees' Union supports the picket. Its secretary-general Khalid Attan said members feel the action is overdue as EPF has taken contributors for granted.

"EPF has to go back to its aim of ensuring contributors have sufficient savings with good dividends when they retire," Khalid said.

Commenting on Cuepacs

president N. Siva Subramaniam's advice to call off the picket, he said unlike civil servants, who have the luxury of a monthly pension, private sector employees depend solely on their EPF savings.

Yesterday, Siva said Cuepacs sees the move as an irresponsible act which can have far and wide adverse implications on the nation's well-being.

"The MTUC has a responsibility towards the safety and integrity of the nation and as such should not act brashly"

National Union of Transport Equipment and Allied Industry Workers executive

secretary Syed Shahrir Syed Mohamad said the National Union of the Teaching Profession (NUTP), an MTUC affiliate of which Siva is the secretary-general, should support the picket.

He said Siva's statement is contradictory as the MTUC working committee meeting included NUTP's representative Abu Bakar Shawkat Ali.

He said MTUC's complaints against EPF may not directly affect civil servants but as a leader of a large workers' organisation, Siva should express his solidarity

There were two new developments regarding EPF:

► The Finance Ministry announced the appointment of Azlan Mohd Zainol, 51, as EPF chief executive officer effective April 16. Azlan, the former managing director of Arab-Malaysian Bank Bhd, is an accountant. The ministry said in a statement that Azlan could use his 22 years of experience in the finance and banking sector to enhance EPF's effectiveness.

► An EPF Association was mooted at a forum late yesterday. A pro tern committee comprising unionists and consumerists was formed. MTUC secretary-general G. Rajasekaran is the chairman.