

Offer RM50 aid to workers. Govt urged

STAR 28 OCT 2001

■ By CATHERINE CHONG

PENANG: The Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) has proposed that a special relief allowance of RM50 be introduced by the Government for both the public and private sectors to help some seven million workers in the country tide over the economic slowdown.

Congress president Zainal Rampak said he had written to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on the issue last week.

He said a similar scheme called Cost of Living Allowance (Cola) was introduced in the 1970s by the then Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak, with employees get-

ting a RM30 monthly allowance for five years during the economic downturn.

He was speaking to reporters at the "Future Challenges of Port Workers Towards the Era of Privatisation in Facing World Economic Globalisation" convention organised by Penang Port Workers Union yesterday.

He said Cola, which was not subjected to deductions, was later incorporated into the salaries of workers.

"The special relief allowance will encourage more domestic spending which in turn will generate more jobs and spur economic growth," he said, adding that the public and private sectors

had some one million and six million workers respectively.

Zainal said MTUC predicted that some 90,000 workers would be retrenched in the country should the economic slowdown persists.

He said Malaysia was not well prepared to meet the challenges brought about by globalisation because of the shortage of skilled workers.

"Many employers considered it a waste of time to send their workers for training and would rather pinch skilled workers from other companies."

On the minimum wage regulation proposed by MTUC, Zainal said the Government had agreed in principle but has yet to fix the quantum.