

Union asks Mahathir to help prevent abuse of VSS

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PETALING JAYA, Mon: The Non-Metallic Mineral Products Manufacturing Employees' Union has appealed to the prime minister to intervene to stop retrenchments under the guise of the voluntary separation scheme (VSS).

Abdullah Abu Bakar, president of the 15,000-strong union, alleged that employers, mainly in the manufacturing sector, resort to unfair labour practices by using the scheme to retrench workers.

He said Hume Industries (M) Bhd, a major concrete products producer with factories in Prai, Kuantan, Beranang and Pasir Gudang, had retrenched local workers under the scheme but retained foreign workers either directly or through contractors.

Abdullah said the company retrenched 255 Malaysians from March to Sep-

tember but none of its 339 foreign workers had been laid off.

"Locals are being harassed by employers into taking up the VSS offer and they resort to tactics such as re-deploying them to other sections and altering work hours in an attempt to discourage them from staying on in their jobs," he said.

In a letter to Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad dated Oct 11, the union said it should be mandatory for employers to report all terminations - including those under the VSS - to the Labour Department which should then conduct an immediate investigation to determine if the cases are legitimate.

There should be no further issuance of work permits to foreign workers until the economy recovers, and foreign workers must be retrenched first before locals.

Abdullah also alleged that certain manufacturers violate conditions of the ISO certification by subcontracting production to backyard factories.

Hume's human resource manager, A. Thangaveloo, declined to comment, saying the managing director was unavailable.