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Plantation-Salary

AGREEMENT REACHED ON MONTHLY SALARY FOR 45,000 PLANTATION WORKERS

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 7 (bernama) -- A total of 45,000 plantation workers in 450 oil palm estates nationwide will enjoy a monthly salary of at least RM325 following the agreement reached today between the Malayan Agricultural Producers Association (MAPA) and the National Union of Plantation Workers (NUPW).

Human Resources Minister Datuk Dr Fong Chan Onn, in announcing the agreement concluded after over a year of negotiations, said the monthly salary, which also applies to oil palm mill workers, would commence from Jan 1 this year until 2003.

"Both parties today agreed the minimum income each month would be RM325 as a safety net on conditions that the workers come to work each day and carry out the work as directed," he told reporters after witnessing the signing of the collective agreement between MAPA and NUPW at the ministry, here.

MAPA was represented by head of its negotiating committee Ho Dua Tiam and MAPA director Mohammed Audong while NUPW was represented by its national executive secretary A.Navamukundan and secretary general G. Sankaran.

Dr Fong said besides the monthly salary, the workers would also continue to enjoy the existing piece rate basic wage with the rate of increase of 7.5 per cent from Jan 1 2001 to Dec 31 2003.

They would also enjoy a higher outturn allowance of RM80.00 per month (for fruit pluckers) compared to RM70.00 previously while oil palm mill workers, RM40.00 compared to RM32.00 previously.

"In addition, the price bonus based on the current price of oil palm would also continue to be paid," he said.

The NUPW had raised the claim of a monthly salary for the plantation workers in 1999.

It attracted the attention of MIC President Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu and also, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who wanted both parties to find way to resolve it.

When both parties failed to reach an agreement, Dr Fong directed them in March last year to bring the case to the Industrial Court which subsequently fixed hearing for Feb 8.

But both parties continued to negotiate with Industrial Relations Department acting as intermediary, and at the same time the Human Resources Ministry had asked the Economic Faculty of Universiti Malaya to conduct a study on the matter.

The report was subsequently presented to the ministry as well as MAPA and NUPW for discussion last December, leading to the agreement reached today.

Navamukundan said they agreed to resolve the issue without going to the Industrial Court.

"This is because if the issue goes to court tomorrow, both parties will surely lose as there are several matters if decided will not benefit both parties," he said.

With the agreement, the workers would earn between RM700 and RM800 a month, compared to daily wage of RM11.50. sehari," he said while thanking Dr Fong and Industrial Relation Department Director-General Datuk Ismail Abdul Rahim for helping conclude the agreement.

Meanwhile, Ho said the agreement, the first in the country's plantation

history, would cost RM210 million within the next three years.

He said he was pleased that the matter was finally resolved and hoped that it would lead to higher productivity among the workers.

On the monthly salary for rubber estate workers, Dr Fong said the matter was still being discussed and hopefully would be resolved soon.

"We hope that the agreement will be the starting point towards resolving the monthly wage issue in other sectors," he said.

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