

08 NOV 2001

Workers-Memorandum

GROUP SUBMIT MEMO ON POVERTY AMONG ESTATE WORKERS

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 8 (Bernama) -- The Plantation Workers Support Committee today submitted a memorandum urging Parliament to move an emergency resolution to discuss "100 years of poverty among estate workers in Malaysia".

The committee's spokesman, K.Kunasegaran, handed over the memorandum to Parliament officer Mohd Sanusi Abdul Rahman to be passed on to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Dewan Rakyat speaker Tun Mohamed Zahir Ismail.

Opposition Leader Datuk Fadzil Noor personally received the memorandum while copies were also given to other members of parliament.

Kunasegaran, who was present at the Parliament lobby together with 200 members of the committee, said the group represented plantation workers in Negeri Sembilan, Selangor, Perak, Penang dan Kedah.

Speaking to reporters, he expressed disappointment that the 2002 Budget tabled last month neglected plantation workers.

He said the memorandum highlighted the need for a monthly basic wage that did not depend on factors outside the workers' control such as weather and market volatility.

According to him, the minimum monthly wage scheme implemented in March for oil palm labourers had not succeeded in raising the workers' salary (inclusive of allowance) to RM1,200 as projected by the Malaysian Agriculture Producers Association (Mapa) and the National Union of Plantation Workers (NUPW).

Under the agreement between Mapa and NUPW, the minimum monthly wage of oil palm workers was set at RM325.

Mapa, however, projected that the workers would be able to receive up to RM1,200 a month inclusive of bonuses and allowance.

Kunasegaran said the workers' minimum salary increment must take into account the current inflation rate and poverty level of the country.

Although the authorities had indicated that rubber workers would also come under a monthly wage system, it had to date not been implemented.

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