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MTUC-Foreigners

MTUC PREPARES REPORT ON INCLUSION OF FOREIGN WORKERS IN TRADE UNIONS

KUALA LUMPUR, July 8 (Bernama) -- The Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) is preparing a report on the inclusion of over one million foreign workers in the country in trade unions.

Its president, Senator Zainal Rampak, said the issue of foreign workers being allowed to join trade unions was brought up when officials of the country's second largest trade union met Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on July 3.

"Dr Mahathir was receptive to the idea and has asked the MTUC to prepare a report and we are in the process of collecting the relevant data including experiences of countries which have allowed foreign labour to join trade unions," he told reporters after opening the ninth annual International Employment Relations Association conference here today.

He said the MTUC felt that foreign labour in Malaysia should be allowed to join trade unions to ensure their rights and privileges as workers were protected.

"This will also ensure that they'll give Malaysia respect and do not say bad and unwanted things when they return home about the labour conditions here," he said.

However, Zainal said if these foreign workers, mostly Indonesians and Bangladeshis, were given the green light to join Malaysian trade unions, they would not be allowed to hold positions in accordance with international practices.

He said the report by the MTUC would also include the numerous problems faced by foreign workers in the country, including discrimination of employers towards such workers.

"We will also suggest (in the report) that foreign workers be brought into the country through government-to-government arrangements and not through employment agencies as this will eliminate a lot of problems," he said.

Zainal said the report was still at its preliminary stage and would take some time to complete.

On another matter, he said about 90,000 of the 180,000 workers in the electronics industry were expected to be retrenched if the country's economic climate remained sluggish until the end of the year.

"I dare say that half of the workers in the country's electronics industry will be without jobs if the current economic situation persist until year end and we (MTUC) have yet to see close collaboration between the Human Resources Ministry and trade unions to overcome this problem," he said.

Zainal said as a first step in tackling the problem, the MTUC would meet high ranking officials from the ministry tomorrow to discuss ways to stop massive retrenchment in the electronics sector which had been hard hit by the downturn in the United States economy.

Asked if the MTUC would call for the establishment of a national union for electronics workers, Zainal said the private sector umbrella union body would have to work on this.

"We are just walking the tunnel...I cannot say we have seen the light at the end of this tunnel," he added.

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