

09 APR 2001  
Zainal-Picket  
TO PICKET OR NOT TO PICKET, APRIL 20 IS D-DAY

PETALING JAYA, April 9 (Bernama) -- The MTUC general council will meet again next week to decide whether or not to proceed with a nation-wide picket planned for May 12 against reduction in workers' contributions to the Employees Provident Fund (EPF)

Malaysian Trades Union Congress president Senator Zainal Rampak told reporters here today he would be bound by whatever decision taken at the meeting slated for April 20.

He was reacting to reporters' questions about the planned picket in the wake of the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's advice that the MTUC should not create new problems for the country.

Zainal said he was prepared to meet Dr Mahathir to discuss issues relating to the EPF and workers' welfare.

"We want the EPF investment panel to answer to the board. At least we know. Because we represent the workers' interests as well as the employers too.

"We are encouraging the EPF to invest money but it must be in profitable companies so that we can get good returns," he said after opening a forum on women in unions organised by the MTUC's women's wing.

Zainal said the planned picket decided by last Friday's MTUC general council meeting was not meant to undermine national economy.

"Picketing does not mean going on strike... don't misquote or misunderstand the planned picket. I reckon the planned picket will not at all adversely affect the national economy," he said.

Zainal said unions in the country had held similar peaceful pickets in the past which did not at all affect the national economy.

The picket planned for May 12 would not be held during working hours, he said.

In his advice to the MTUC yesterday, Dr Mahathir said that picketing would not solve problems.

Meanwhile in MELAKA, Cuepacs, the country's largest public sector employees union urged the MTUC to opt for a more realistic approach in improving the lot of the workers and at the same bring benefits to the nation.

Its president N. Siva Subramaniam told reporters that Cuepacs was not convinced that demonstrations would be the panacea for all problems compared with the approach of negotiation.

Commenting on Dr Mahathir's disapproval of the MTUC's planned nation-wide picket next month, Siva Subramaniam said that for one demonstration would chase away investors.

"Cuepacs itself is against the EPF's annuity scheme and has fixed April 30 for a 200-strong delegation to meet EPF chairman Tan Sri Abdul Halim Ali to discuss the matter," he said.

The delegation would take advantage of the meeting to discuss various other EPF-related issues as it believed that in difficult times, all parties should strive towards preserving peace and stability on which further economic growth hinged.

"Cuepacs feels it has a responsibility to help the government deal with problems in times of difficulty," Siva Subramaniam added.

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