

01 MAY 2001

Workers-Roundup

TRADE UNIONS LEAD WORKERS' DAY CELEBRATIONS IN MALAYSIA

KUALA LUMPUR, May 1 (Bernama) -- Major labour unions led May Day celebrations in Malaysia today, organising several events to mark the day devoted to workers worldwide.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad attended a Workers' Day gathering here organised by Cuepacs, the umbrella body for public sector unions.

Dr Mahathir, accompanied by his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali and Human Resources Minister Datuk Dr Fong Chan Onn, was greeted by some 90 uniformed government servants on arrival at the gathering attended by some 1,000 civil servants.

In Subang Jaya, Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) organised a similar Workers' Day celebration at Wisma MTUC and it was attended by over 3,000 workers.

The celebration started as early as 7am when the workers started marching from three different locations to converge at the MTUC headquarters for the celebration proper.

MTUC president Senator Zainal Rampak, in his speech which touched on several issues, advised workers to protect their rights and not to be afraid of defending the rights even if threatened by their employers.

He also called on the government to recognise Conventions 97 and 98 in the co-labour standard introduced by the International Labour Organisation requiring in-house unions to be recognised as full fledged unions.

"This is especially to allow government servants to form their union and not just in-house union as they do not have a bargaining power," he said.

At the Kuala Lumpur City Centre (KLCC), 40 non-governmental organisations held a gathering in conjunction with Workers' Day, attracting about 2,000 people.

The event which begun at 10.30am lasted for two hours with speeches from representatives of workers, mostly from the plantation sector.

They also read a "Deklarasi Rakyat" (People's Declaration), which touched on workers' rights in the country.

In KOTA KINABALU, Sabah Resource and Information Technology Development Minister Tan Sri Joseph Kurup urged workers in the state to avoid industrial actions in trying to get their problems addressed.

He said actions like picketing would only result in more problems, not only to the workers but also the community at large.

"We don't want to emulate workers in other countries which are frequently hit by chaos because their workers resort to staging demonstrations," he said at a May Day gathering organised by the MTUC.

Meanwhile, Sabah MTUC chairman Francis Ariffin said four more unions affiliated with the congress were formed in the past one year, giving more room for workers in the state to fight for their rights.

They are the Sabah Hotels, Resorts and Restaurants Workers Union; Malaysia Airlines Executive Officer Union; Sabah Banks Officer Union; and the Sabah Agriculture Executive Union.

"I wish to congratulate members of the new unions for they have realised how important it is to have a union to protect your interest," he said.

With the inception of the new unions, MTUC which made its presence in Sabah in 1984, now has 18 affiliates in the state representing the interest of some 35,000 members.

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