

# MTUC pursuing paternity leave issue

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — The possibility of paternity leave and longer maternity leave are expected to feature prominently when the Malaysian Trades Union Congress meets Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in May.

MTUC president Senator Zainal Rampak said the organisation submitted its proposals to the Prime Minister on Dec 8.

The MTUC has proposed a two-week paternity leave for men to look after the family during their wife's confinement and extending maternity leave for women from 60 to 90 days.

"I think the time has come for the Government to seriously consider providing paternity leave for men, especially in the private sector.

"The Congress feels strongly that the spouse should be around when the wife goes for delivery and subsequently to take care of her needs and that of the baby and other children."

Currently, husbands working in the public sector are given three days leave when the spouse delivers.

Zainal said in the private sector, it depended on the collective agreement between the union and the management with some companies not granting paternity leave at all.

Women and Family Development Minister Datuk Shahrizat Abdul Jalil said recently that her Ministry will study the proposal and the findings will be presented to the Human Resources Ministry

for action.

Meanwhile, several men interviewed supported the proposal for paternity leave as they felt that it was a necessity.

Private sector employee Sarjit Singh said paternity leave of three days was insufficient as there was a lot to look after when wives were in confinement.

"Hospitalisation itself takes up most of the time. Husbands also have to make sure that the mother and child are safe, register the birth, take food and clothing to hospital, and later settle the bill."

Company executive Mohamed Shariff Ismail, 45, said the spouse played a very important role when the wife went on maternity leave.

"The burden falls on the husband at this time," he said.