

Mapa inaction on wages angers groups

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PETALING JAYA: The Malaysian Indian Development Association has urged the Human Resources Minister to take "drastic steps" to finalise the issue of monthly wages for rubber tappers in the plantation industry.

Its vice-president M. Gnana Segaran said the matter was long overdue and claimed that the Malaysian Agricultural Producers Association (Mapa) had been dragging its feet.

He was commenting on reports that talks between Mapa and the National Union of Plantation Workers on the monthly wage had ended in a deadlock after Mapa insisted on a RM300 wage ceiling for the rubber tappers.

Segaran said the proposal for RM300 monthly salary was not acceptable as it only amounted to RM10 per day, hardly enough for a small family to survive.

NUPW executive secretary A. Navamukundan said the union had already given their views on Mapa proposal's but was disappointed that Mapa had maintained the same wage ceiling.

"There was no way for us to consider their proposals. We are only asking for a reasonable wage for

them. We are not asking for the sky," he said.

DAP Youth committee member T. Kannan slammed Mapa for coming out with such a low salary scheme for the rubber tappers.

"They (Mapa) should realise that even a driver gets about RM600 per month while a rubber tapper, who gets up before dawn and works in the dark, is only getting RM300.

"These employers should think of the tappers' sacrifices," he said.

Kannan urged NLJPW to boycott any further discussions and request the minister to hand over the matter to the Industrial Court for a decision.

"We hope the Industrial Court will set an early date and bring some light to the rubber tappers," he said.

Indian Progressive Front president Datuk M.G. Pandithan said it was a shame that Mapa had failed to consider the contributions of the rubber tappers for almost 100 years.

He said IPF would seek a meeting with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to explain the predicament of the tappers.