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Zainal-CPF

MTUC CALLS FOR QUICK SETTLEMENT OF CPF ISSUE

KUALA LUMPUR, May 20 (Bernama) -- The Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) today called for a quick settlement of the Central Provident Fund (CPF) issue involving the life savings of Malaysian workers previously employed in Singapore.

Its president, senator Zainal Rampak said it had been more than three years since the matter hit the limelight but the matter had not been resolved.

"When Singapore's Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew visited Malaysia last year and met our Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, it was mutually agreed that the CPF matter would be negotiated as part of a comprehensive package of five key issues involving relations between Singapore and Malaysia," he said in a statement, here.

The package involved issues related to the Singapore government's takeover of Keretapi Tanah Melayu-owned railway land in Tanjong pagar, relocation of the Malaysian Immigration Complex from Tanjong Pagar to Woodlands, usage of Malaysian airspace by Singapore military aircraft and water supply from Johor to Singapore.

Zainal said both leaders agreed that the issues had been resolved through mutual consent and subsequently directed officials from both countries to discuss and draw up the finer points of agreement to give legal effect to them.

However, there seemed to be little, if any, progressive movement in this "comprehensive package" and a meeting in this regard between the foreign ministers of both countries was scheduled to be held only in July, he said.

"In view of the urgency of the situation, we call upon the Singapore government to de-link the CPF issue from the "package" and, as a matter of priority, resolve it at the fastest possible time," he said.

The MTUC had sent a memorandum to the Singapore Finance Minister and met the Singapore High Commissioner to explain to him the importance of a fast track approach to the CPF problem, he added.

He said the MTUC had received numerous telephone calls from affected workers who kept asking when they could receive their CPF money since many of them were retrenched during the economic crisis, he said.

"They are now compelled to borrow money at commercial rates from banks and finance companies, while those who do not qualify for credit facilities have no alternative but to approach illegal money lenders and loan sharks for assistance," he said.

Zainal said the legal reasons cited by the Singapore government that the CPF Act only allowed withdrawals when the affected workers reached 55, were neither acceptable nor tenable from the standpoints of reasonableness and equity.

"It is the worker's right to have unhampered access to their own retirement savings when they leave the republic," he said.

Therefore, the MTUC urged the Malaysian government to pursue the matter closely with the Singapore government and amicably resolve the issue, he added.

-- BERNAMA

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