

04/02/2003

Plea by industrial court chairmen

Annie Freeda Cruetz

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Seven Industrial Court chairmen and a president appointed on a contract basis have yet to receive the "enhanced benefits" promised by the Human Resources Ministry last April.

Although they received letters two months ago which renewed their contracts for another two years, nothing had been stipulated regarding the benefits or their scheme of service. The eight are chairmen Datuk Abu Bakar Awang, Mohd Nor Yahya, Datin Siti Saleha Datuk Sheikh Abu Bakar, Abu Hashim Abu Bakar, Lim Heng Seng, Syed Ahmad Radzi, K. Ramakrishnan and president Yusof Ahmad.

Abu Hashim told the New Straits Times that the struggle to get the terms and conditions of their appointments gazetted under the Industrial Relations Act 1967, has been going on for 30 years. He appealed to the Government, including Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to look into their plight.

"The judges feel humiliated as their plight has never been looked into although they work just as hard as the other judges. They are suffering in silence as they do not want to put down the judiciary.

"We are still waiting for our grievances to be resolved and for the scheme of service and terms and conditions to be drawn up and gazetted," he said.

Industrial court chairmen appointed on contract are placed under the VK6 or superscale B Grade special and presidents on Grade VK5 or superscale A special.

Abu Hashim said besides the basic salary they were paid benefits stipulated under the service circular SSB for entertainment, special sitting, and housing with no pension.

He said in June 1996, a circular came into effect with an enhancement of benefits for which they were deprived of. "They bound us by government circular, discipline, general orders and financial general orders but deprived us of the enhanced benefits and we are losing out by about RM2,000 a month," he said.

Following a report by the NST on the non-renewal of contracts of the judges early last year, Human Resources Minister Datuk Dr Fong Chan Onn had agreed in principle to extend their services to 65 years.

Fong agreed that the two-year contract for Industrial court chairmen was not the best system and would try to see how best it could be improved.