

**MTUC offers quid pro quo deal with Pakatan
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by Salhan K Ahmad**

The Malaysian Trade Union Congress (MTUC) today mooted an agreement with Pakatan Rakyat, promising electoral support in return for a rejection of amendments to the Employment Bill in Parliament.

Speaking on the sidelines of the PKR Congress in Pulai, Johor, MTUC treasurer Alias Awang said that Pakatan should sign a memorandum of understanding with MTUC to signify the support.

Alias, who spoke on behalf of the workers' union in a special address, said the MOU will be presented at the Selangor MTUC meeting on Dec 2.

"I will raise this motion (in the meeting)...we need to sign the MOU to show our sincerity in helping each other. You help me, I help you," he said, in parody of the oft-repeated phrase by Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak during the Sibujaya election campaign.

Declaring "war" on the "dastardly government" (kerajaan haram jadah) Alias said MTUC will support any party which succeeds in blocking the amendments to the Act.

He said that workers represent a significant voting bloc, making up approximately five million of the total voters. MTUC itself claims a membership of 800,000.

"If workers are left to struggle without support, then I fear that they will switch side," he said.

More pickets promised

He added that MTUC also vowed more pickets against the Act if it is passed by the Dewan Negara, expected to be Dec 12.

This follows nationwide pickets on the matter last month.

In his address to the congress, Alias had sought support from the delegates to join them in the demonstration. The audience responded with chants of "Long live the worker!" from the floor.

The Dewan Rakyat had last month passed the amendments to the Employment Act, which includes 22 amendments and 17 new provisions and two new sections.

It was passed after five hours of debate in the lower house, most prominently by Hulu Langat MP Abdullah Sani and Klang MP Charles Santiago-- both seasoned workers' rights activists.

The Dewan Negara is expected to table the amendments next month.

Among the contentious amendments is the provision to allow contractors of employment or employment workers to be recognised as employers and not intermediaries or agents.