

**May Day protesters unhappy with minimum wage**  
**MalaysiaKini.com**  
**May 01, 2012**  
**By Koh Jun Lin**

About 700 demonstrators took to the streets of Kuala Lumpur in an annual May Day rally today, chanting that the minimum wage policy announced by Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak yesterday was not enough.

They called for a RM1,500 minimum wage, instead of the government's RM900 per month for Peninsula Malaysians and RM800 for those in Sabah, Sarawak and Labuan.

NONEIn the midst of the beat of drums and improvised percussion instruments that gave the protest a festive mood, the red-clad protestors chanted, "Demand fair wage. Demand comfortable pay. Workers want RM1,500 minimum wage law."

The group also demanded free and fair elections, stop discrimination against female employees, stop exploitation of foreign workers, control the price of goods, and free education.

The 14 demands were spelled out in leaflets distributed during the rally, known as the May 1, 2012 Declaration, and endorsed by 58 NGOs and political parties including the National Union for Bank Employees (NUBE), PKR, Parti Sosialis Malaysia (PSM), All Women's Action Society (Awam), Anti-Free Trade Agreement Coalition, and the Kuala Lumpur and Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall.

NONEHowever, when met at the sidelines of the rally, Malaysian Trade Union Congress (MTUC) president Khalid Atan said that the current minimum wage policy is sufficient for the time being.

"This amount (RM900) is not going to stay there forever. It is not a fixed amount. It will be revised every two years, and we will use that opportunity to improve the wages," he said.

He added that the MTUC's next agenda is to call for a cost of living allowance for private sector workers, and to abolish the contract labour system that he criticised as a very insecure form of employment.

Peaceful protest

Some 50 police officers kept watch and helped to direct traffic. The group took a 550-metre march from the Central Market at 10am, to the sidewalks outside Menara Maybank, which they occupied for about two hours for speeches, drum performances, and singing.

In stark contrast to the police crackdown against the Bersih 3.0 rally just three days ago, not a single riot police officer was spotted, and the officers present cooperated in facilitating the rally.

NONEThe rally's participants were primarily NUBE members, but also included members of the Occupy Dataran movement, the NGO Jaringan Rakyat Tertidas (Jerit), PSM, PRM, Malaysia Youth and Democratic Movement (Dema) and Awam.

Observers from the Bar Council and the Malaysian Human Rights Commission were also present.

As soon as the May Day rally ended at about 11.30am, some of the participants left, leaving NUBE members to picket the Maybank headquarters.

The NUBE had previously accused Maybank Berhad of 'union busting' by deducting the salaries of its exco members, and coercing its members to join its in-house union, apparently with support from the Ministry of Human Resources.

"That is why we are gathered here today. We hope that this gathering will convey a message to the prime minister to clean out the rubbish that is taking place in the ministry," NUBE secretary-general J Solomon told reporters the rally.

The peaceful yet colourful assembly ended at about 12.20pm after several more rounds of singing and speeches from NUBE members.

Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd  
Source: <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/196620>



