

Minimum wage: Penang MTUC calls for picket
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By Susan Loone

The Malaysian Trade Union Congress (MTUC) is planning to picket nationwide to express its dissatisfaction over the minimum wage announced by Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak on Monday in his Labour Day message.

penang mtuc dinner 190611 mtuc penang branch chief s ravindran Penang MTUC chairperson S Ravindran (left) said workers felt cheated over the minimum wage being set at RM900 for Peninsular Malaysia workers, while those in Sabah and Sarawak will get RM800.

Ravindran added that workers were upset with the incorporation of part of the fixed allowances into the basic salary.

He stressed that MTUC had proposed RM900 minimum salary plus RM300 cost of living allowance or RM1,200 as fixed minimum.

“Do not play around with the workers and unions,” he hit out in his speech at the Penang branch MTUC solidarity dinner in Prai.

“We will not discount the fact that we will picket over the issue. Are you prepared to picket?” he asked the 600-odd people who attended the event last night.

The crowd responded with a resounding “yes” followed by three loud calls of “long live workers”.

Yesterday, Human Resource Minister Dr S Subramaniam asked that the minimum wage be “accepted and not politicised” as it was worked out by economic experts.

He added that it was not set by politicians but was based on a study conducted by the Technical Committee of the National Wage Advisory Council and the World Bank.

Does not reach target group

The minister added that the rate was accepted by all the councils representing employers and workers.

penang mtuc dinner 190611 penang mtuc branch secretary k veeriah However, state MTUC secretary K Veeriah (right) described the policy as “stupid” as Najib’s minimum wage rate does not benefit most of the workers, especially those in the hotel industry which contributes 39 percent to the state’s economy.

He said these workers were already earning about the same amount as their monthly salary of RM300-RM400 was supplemented with service point awards, which are usually twice more than the basic pay.

“What’s the point of the minimum wage when it does not benefit most workers? We will not accept Najib’s announcement because it does not reach the target group.

“It seems this policy was made without having a heart for workers. We will challenge those who came up with the idea,” he added.

Veeriah also slammed his colleague MTUC deputy secretary-general Samuel Devadasanhas, who described Najib’s announcement as “a gift for all workers” and that it was a “fantastic start”.

Veeriah said the national leader of MTUC was “silly” for not considering basic economic issues which affect the lives of workers, especially the rising cost of living.

He joined Ravindran in calling for a nationwide picket, saying the minimum wage policy which incorporates allowances is bound to result in disputes between employer and employees.

“We should not compromise. We will continue to fight for our demand that the minimum wage rate should be at RM1,200, which includes the RM300 cost of living allowance.”

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