

PSM: TPPA may further erode workers' rights

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Putrajaya's plans to review proposed amendments of the Trade Unions Act 1959 to make it consistent with the Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA) may further erode workers' rights, warned Parti Sosialis Malaysia (PSM).

The Trade Unions Act 1959 is already watered down in terms of ensuring basic workers' rights such as the right of association to form a union, collective bargaining and the right to strike, it said.

"PSM is very concerned that the Trade Union Act 1959 and the Industrial Relations Act 1967 will be further adulterated and remaining workers' rights ripped apart to please investors and corporations that are expected to bring in foreign direct investment when the TPPA agreement is signed," said PSM national treasurer A Sivarajan in a statement yesterday.

Sivarajan said it is expected that transnational cooperation would seek to minimise the role of workers including blocking the formation of unions in factories.

"Amendments to the Trade Union Act in tandem with the TPPA would mean further obstructions and limitations for workers to organise themselves," he said.

Sivarajan added that while the government may argue that workers' rights is protected under a labour chapter in the TPPA, the agreement is designed in such a way where other chapters can override it.

Equally concerning, he said, Deputy Human Resource Minister Ismail Abdul Muttalib's announcement that the legislation will comply with the TPPA appears as if Putrajaya has resigned to accepting the agreement.

This is despite the government's insistence that it would not sign the agreement if it was to the country's detriment following fierce protest from various interest groups.

"Why does Malaysia plan to amend the Trade Union Act when we have not agreed to sign the TPPA yet.

"Is this an indication that Malaysia is going to sign the TPPA in spite of the massive opposition to it?" he said.

The TPPA is the proposed free trade agreement between the US with 11 countries including Malaysia.

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