

Dr M to hit the streets again, this time for workers' rights
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Terence Tang

Former Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad will once again hit the streets of Kuala Lumpur.

Come May 1, he and Selangor Menteri Besar Azmin Ali will attend the May Day rally organised by the Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC).

Since launching his campaign against Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak, Mahathir has become a regular feature at street protests and public rallies, which the nonagenarian had little tolerance for during his tenure as prime minister.

In announcing Mahathir's participation, MTUC acting president Abdullah Sani Abdul Hamid told reporters that the rally would demand better treatment for workers nationwide, irrespective of whether they are foreign or local.

"Our demands include the setting of the monthly minimum wage to RM1,200, maintaining the EPF (Employees Provident Fund) withdrawal age at 55 and further study on the impact of the goods and services tax (GST) on the rakyat," he said.

"We hope to get an attendance of between 10,000 and 20,000 people at the rally.

"We must stop the oppression of workers by certain employers and authorities. We need to defend the employees' rights so they can be treated fairly and with respect.

"The employees in question include all of you too," he added, referring to the journalists present.

Quizzed further on Mahathir's presence, MTUC secretary-general N Gopal Kishnam said the union hopes he would share his contributions towards workers in the country during his tenure as prime minister.

In addition to the minimum wage, EPF and GST issues, MTUC also urged the government to:

- Respect the federal constitution by protecting the rights of workers and guaranteeing the social safety of workers of all nationalities;
- Recognise and implement the ILO Convention 87, which comprises the right for employees to form associations and more;
- Make it compulsory for employers from the private sector to provide a cost-of-living adjustment allowance of RM300 to every employee;
- To reconsider and analyse the implementation of Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA), so that its implementation will not burden the rakyat, especially in the form of increasing medical costs;
- To fully implement the ILO Convention 98 so that workers can reclaim the right to hold discussions with officials in the public sector; and
- To study and amend the law in regard to employees, so that the workers and unions' rights are truly protected.

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