

Khairy: Minimum wage also moral issue
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BN Youth are calling for the swift implementation of minimum wage as one of the pillars in achieving a high-income nation by the year 2020.

But more than just an economic issue, the movement is calling it a moral issue for the government to raise the living standard of the workers from the brink of poverty.

NONEAccording to its chief Khairy Jamaluddin Abu Bakar (left in photo) - also the Umno Youth chairperson - the present low wages means that the Malaysian workers would be trapped in the cycle of poverty for a long time.

"With the inflation rate going up, as well as the sketchy Consumer Price Index figures, the cost of living will just continue going up while Malaysians will continue to be poorer.

"Without a concerted effort to implement and to legislate a minimum wage, it will be an uphill battle to achieve a high-income nation status which is fair and without any income disparity," he said during a press conference at the Umno headquarters in Kuala Lumpur this afternoon.

He also quoted a recent study by the Human Resources Ministry on 1.3 million workers in the country that showed more than a third of them earn less than RM700 a month - below the poverty line of RM720 per month.

Khairy also cited a recent World Bank study that found Malaysian wages have only increased by 2.6 percent every year in the past 10 years, as compared to the global average of 3.2 percent.

Most countries have minimum wage

"Ninety percent of the countries in the world have implemented some form of minimum wage," he said.

Before that, Khairy, together with his peers in fellow BN component parties, also had a roundtable discussion with representatives from the Malaysian Trades Union Congress as well as Cuepacs, an umbrella body for union organisations in the civil service.

Together, he said, they will be organising a forum soon on the matter, and will be handing over the resolutions passed at the event to the government.

NONE"We hope that there will be a formulation of the policy before the New Economic Model is announced in October," he said.

Also present at the press conference was MTUC secretary-general G Rajasegaran (right), who reiterated that the minimum wage set must be for both local and migrant workers in line with the International Labour Organisation guidelines.

"We are aware of the government's concern over investor confidence and we also want to find middle ground. There would be no point of us becoming a high-income nation when there are no jobs," he said.

To that, Khairy said that any move to set the minimum wage policy must have the cooperation of the network of government agencies, which can then act together to also curb the influx of foreign workers.

At the moment, the government estimates there are two million foreign workers currently in the country.

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