

Protect workers before investors, government urged
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Labour rights group Jaringan Rakyat Tertindas (Jerit) has condemned the government's latest explanation over its refusal to adopting a minimum wage policy.

Deputy Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak said on Feb 25 that the government would not 'rush into' a minimum wage policy fearing rising cost would scare away investors and make Malaysia uncompetitive.

In a rebuttal, Jerit coordinator K Simon said International Labour Organisation statistics show that there was no negative effects on employment by a moderate increase in minimum wages.

"In fact, their research proved that with the implementation of higher minimum wage, the national level of poverty decreased in Latin American countries," he said in a statement today.

Simon noted that several developed countries such as Australia and New Zealand had already adopted minimum wage policies since the 19th century.

Global trend

Regional neighbours such as Thailand, Pakistan, South Korea, China, Sri Lanka and Cambodia, have some form of minimum wage policies as well, Simon said.

"Thus, Malaysia cannot be repeating that minimum wage will make ourselves uncompetitive [In protecting the interest of workers] the government should not give in to the pressure by investors and employers," he added.

Simon said since the government was mulling raising civil services wages, it must not forget the plight of factory workers who are largely from the lower income group.

"They are more in numbers compared to (low income) civil servants and are we allowing this group of people to be exploited by foreign investors?" he asked.

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