

MTUC horse trading in full swing
Malaysianmirror.com
Disember 26, 2010

PETALING JAYA – Intense campaigning and horse trading is now in progress among the various factions and individual contestants in the triennial Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) election to be held on Dec 29.

The main thrust of the election is the fight for the number one post and the secretary-general's post.

Incumbent president, Syed Shahir Syed Mohamud is being challenged by his Deputy, Mohd Khalid Atan (Timber Industry Employees Union) in a straight fight.

While the secretary-general's post which has been vacated by veteran unionist G. Rajasegaran will see a three-cornered tussle between Abdul Halim Mansor (National Union of Petroleum and Chemical Industries), Abdullah Sani Abdul Hamid (Club Employees Union) and J. Solomon (National Union of Bank Employees).

A total of 37 candidates are vying for 15 posts.

A total of 546 delegates from 121 affiliate unions are eligible to vote. The king makers in the elections would be unions with big block votes - like the National Union of Teaching Profession (NUTP) with 42 votes, Electrical Workers Union with 20 votes and NUBE with 13.

MTUC sources told Bernama that a majority of the members were seeking for changes in the leadership as they feel that the organisation in the past had been ineffective in resolving their grouses.

The incoming leadership would have to resolve important issues like amendments to the various labour legislations, decide on the quantum of salary for the minimum wage policy, resolve the migrant workers problem, the setting up of a Pension Fund for private sector workers, and other matters concerning wages, bonuses and work conditions.

Outgoing secretary-general, G. Rajasegaran said the MTUC should continue to pursue the issues that were being initiated by the present council and bring them to fruition.

He felt that the new council should engage more with the government and work towards the good of the workers and the nation.

"We realise that in the past we had been perceived to be anti-government because some of our leaders were in the opposition party," he said.

"It is vital that the incoming council should eradicate this perception and sincerely work with the government to achieve substantial benefits for their membership," he added.

NUBE secretary-general, J. Solomon fully agreed with this and said that if he were to be elected, he would work hard to engage not only the government but also the private sector to appreciate the contribution of the workers towards the nation's development.

"We want workers to be treated with dignity and as important partners in development," he emphasised.

Presidential aspirant Khalid said if he were to win, he would endeavour to restore the "image of MTUC as an independent and apolitical workers organisation".

"I will ensure that MTUC is united and truly becomes a workers protector and champion," he said.

Incumbent vice-president, A. Balasubramaniam who is seeking reelection said of late the MTUC was playing a very prominent role in helping the government to maintain industrial harmony in the country.

"We are proud to say that Malaysia is one of the few countries in the world where there is industrial harmony without much social unrest that is prevalent in other nations," he said.

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Source : <http://www.malaysianmirror.com/media-buzz-detail/6-nation/51280>