

# MTUC can't expect firms to match govt's generosity

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AFTER the successful campaign by Cuepacs for a salary adjustment, the Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) is now trying its luck to get similar benefits for workers in the private sector.

Its leaders are no doubt encouraged by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's call to the business community to consider following the Government's decision.

However, Pak Lah can only suggest, and the final decision will still be up to individual employers. The MTUC will be mistaken in its belief that it will get government support.

The commercial world will never subject itself to any pressure from any quarter to follow the Government, unless legislation is introduced to compel it to do so. But this is not going to happen.

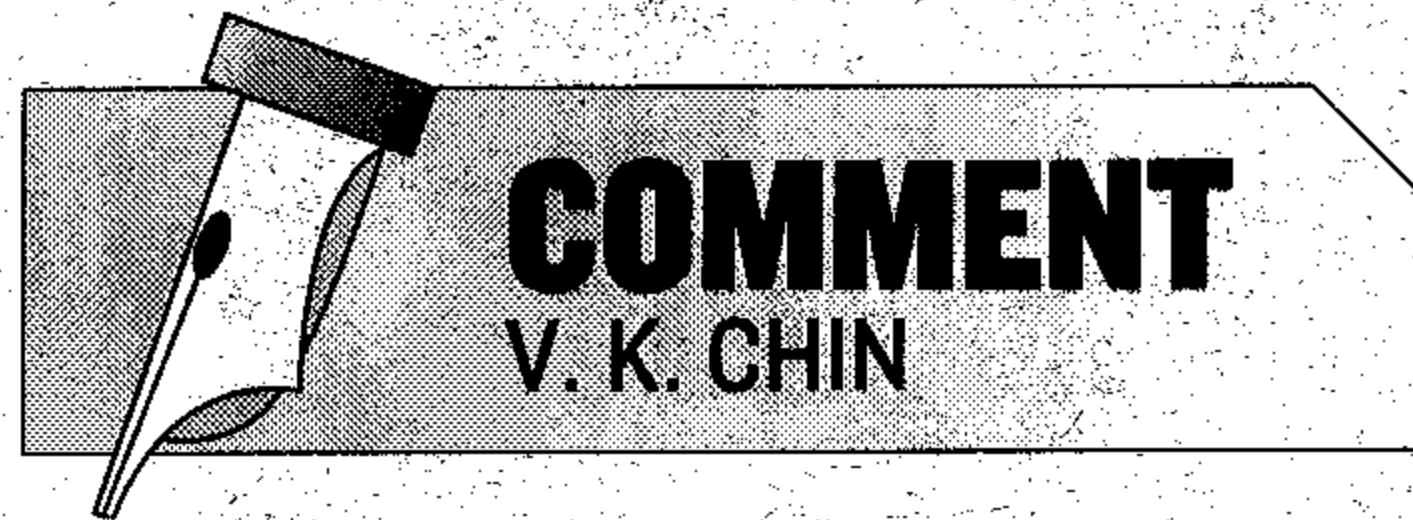
No employer will raise his workers' salaries because others are doing it, even if

Pak Lah's suggestion is to be taken up by some private firms.

Government-linked corporations are also likely to follow the private sector employers. They may take the PM's view into consideration, but the Government will give firms the discretion to do what they think is best.

The MTUC therefore will be wasting its time if it were to try and force private employers to increase their workers' salary or to increase the cost of living allowance. It has also called on employers to raise the minimum wage to RM900 and provide a Cola of RM300 per worker.

The employers' association will be the first to object to outsiders telling it what to do, especially when it comes to issues with



serious financial implications.

Employers will only do so if they are doing well and, therefore, can afford to offer bet-

ter terms and conditions of service at the appropriate time, especially during negotiations for a new collective agreement.

What the MTUC is proposing will cripple the financial status of most companies since they cannot afford to be as generous as the Government. While the Government can predict revenue based on tax collections and other receipts, its leaders still have to consider whether the Government can afford to raise wages and allowances.

Private employers cannot over commit themselves where wages, allowances and

bonuses are concerned. It is difficult for them to forecast their business prospects beyond a year or two.

They do not want to find themselves in a position that in bad years, they would be unable to pay wages on time or retrench workers to save cost. This will be quite irresponsible, and companies may close shop unless they can balance their books properly.

It is also inconceivable that the MTUC, according to reports, will take industrial action if its demands are not met. It has threatened to begin by picketing at selected locations and to even call a one-day strike.

It is not only the employers who will take exception to such tactics, but the Government too.

All such loose talk should cease, and the public expects the umbrella body of unions to stop issuing threats to achieve its target.