

Bank union says government popularity waning over rising living costs
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KUALA LUMPUR, Sep 6 — The National Union of Bank Employees (NUBE) said today it will embark on a roadshow to highlight the widening income gap between clerical workers and management at Maybank Bhd, adding that the Najib administration's popularity was waning because of inflation and cost of living issues.

NUBE secretary-general J. Solomon said today the union, which represents some 30,000 clerical staff in the banking sector, had no choice but to hold the roadshow after Datuk Seri Najib Razak's prolonged silence over its pay dispute with Malaysia's largest bank.

"The silence of the prime minister to act on complaints against Maybank, a government-linked company (GLC), will not endear him to the public," Solomon said in a statement.

"Maybank is boldly and brutally violating international standards of human rights, making a mockery of Malaysian laws, and making wider an already huge income divide."

He warned that the alleged exploitation of workers and the undermining of trade union rights by Maybank would have a direct impact on bank workers and could spread to all Malaysian workers if such practices are not stopped.

NUBE has been in dispute with Maybank over bonuses since June 2009.

The union is seeking an 80-month bonus for its members based on the rationale that NUBE members should receive the same eight-month bonus that the bank's senior managers and contract officers had been receiving annually for the past 10 years.

Maybank's in-house union, the Maybank Non-Executive Employees Union (Mayneu), has alleged that the "sudden demand" for the 80-month bonus was a ploy by NUBE to stop its members from joining Mayneu, which was set up in January.

Solomon also said today that the Najib administration's growing unpopularity could be attributed to the "yawning gap" between the rich and the poor, rapidly rising inflation and the exploitation of workers by large corporations.

"With massive anti-union activities, reduced rights and diminishing real income levels, Malaysians are frustrated and this feeling is boiling over," he said.

"Government policies are catered towards businesses growing. This, by itself, is the right thing to do but it is being done at the expense of Malaysian workers