

MTUC sticks to Parliament picket plan
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PETALING JAYA, Oct 1 — The Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) will carry out its planned picket outside Parliament on Monday despite an 11th-hour meeting with Human Resource Ministry officials today.

The decision was made by MTUC council members after representatives from the umbrella body's 250 trade unions and the ministry failed to break the impasse over Putrajaya's plans to revise labour laws despite the four-hour-long forum.

MTUC president Mohd Khalid Atan (picture) said he will mobilise at least 1,000 members to stage a protest against proposed amendments to the Employment Act 1955, which are expected to be tabled during the Parliament session beginning Monday.

"We will mobilise as many as we can," he told reporters after chairing the post-forum council meeting at Wisma TWU here.

He pointed out that it was unfair of the ministry to table the Bill without first discussing the amendments with trade unions via the National Labour Advisory Council (NLAC).

Trade unions and opposition politicians have decried the proposed changes to labour laws, claiming they were for the benefit of multinational corporations and potential investors, and would allow employers to keep workers on fixed-term contracts indefinitely.

Khalid said seven principal officers from the MTUC would still attend the 10am NLAC meeting arranged by the ministry after the picket was first announced last Sunday.

But he said after the meeting, the MTUC officers would then join the picket line outside Parliament, expected to start at 11am.

Khalid also said MTUC was ready to face the consequences of its actions, including possible dispersal of picketers by riot police.

"We are from the MTUC, representing the workers, for the workers' rights... Let them do. But we'll still be there," he said.

He added that the MTUC will write to the ministry soon asking for the Bill to be withdrawn completely.

Human Resources Ministry had previously said it had consulted unions and employers' associations 18 times since early 2010 before coming up with the amendments.

"This amendment was not rushed because we had undergone a comprehensive consultation process with all interested parties," it had said.

The ministry is set to present the Bill to amend the Employment Act 1955 for a second reading in the Dewan Rakyat.

The second reading of the Employment (Amendment) Bill 2010 has been postponed twice before this.

Last October, the ministry withdrew the Bill from the second reading to incorporate several changes and add further amendments but has refused to furnish further details.

The Bill was first tabled on July 8 last year and touched on provisions involving sexual harassment at the workplace and the welfare of housekeepers.

It is believed the laws scheduled to be amended include the Employment Act 1955, Industrial Relations Act 1967 and the Trade Union Act 1959.

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