

MTUC calls off picket, gives PM a month
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By Shannon Teoh

SUBANG JAYA, April 10 — The Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) has called off its April 13 picket, giving Datuk Seri Najib Razak a month to show some progress on what the umbrella body for labour unions claims are “union-busting” efforts supported by his administration.

The coalition of 390 trade unions that represent 800,000 workers told a press conference today it has “deferred” the decision on the picket, which was to be held in front of the prime minister’s office on Friday, until its next action committee meeting on May 10.

“This is to show respect to the PM who met us for over an hour last week. We will give him a month to make some progress before deciding,” MTUC president Khalid Atan said in front of a banner which said “MTUC has lost faith in the human resource minister.”

He accused the ministry, led by MIC deputy president Datuk S. Subramaniam, of turning a blind eye to the appeals by the National Union Bank Employees against an in-house union set up at Maybank in 2010 and the Malaysian Airlines System Employees’ Union against the National Union for Flight Attendants Malaysia formed last year.

Khalid also repeated MTUC’s stand that amendments to the Employment Act, passed in Parliament but not yet gazetted, will legalise and increase the number of contract workers, severely damaging the strength of unions.

He said that there are “rumours” of an in-house union being set up in Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad (KTMB) when there is already a railwaymen’s union.

“Maybank, MAS and KTMB are all GLCs. If the new in-house union is allowed at KTMB, then this is a clear indicator of a union-busting attitude by the ministry,” Khalid said.

MTUC organised several pickets last year against the amendments to the Employment Act which it says will be a “return to slavery” and has also accused the government of delaying a minimum wage policy which Putrajaya earlier said would be ready by the end of 2011.

It had warned Najib in October last year the votes of 5.7 million workers “could decide matters” on polling day unless the labour law changes that could affect job security and workers’ rights are withdrawn.

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