

Consider minimum salary of RM900, says MTUC Sabah

KOTA KINABALU. Despite having enjoyed 50 years of independence, most Malaysians are generally still living below the poverty line unless the Government takes positive measures to rectify the anomaly between the rich and the poor, particularly in the wake of rising prices of goods.

Stressing this in conjunction with Labour Day which falls today (Thursday), Sabah Malaysian Trade Union Congress (MTUC) Chairman Simon Yayun Lamadas said this gap had become increasingly wider. He noted that the 2006 statistics showed 1.67 million workers were earning RM700 and below and a majority of those in Sabah were below the poverty level with below RM600, particularly those involved in the hotel, public transport, security services and food sectors.

In this respect, he hoped the Government, especially the Human Resource Ministry, could consider the MTUC's request for a minimum salary of RM900 plus cost of living allowance (COLA) of RM300 a month to enable Malaysians living at a comfortable level.

MTUC believed such request is reasonable in view of the soaring prices of goods and costs of services, coupled with a 30 per cent increase in food prices in the urban areas.

Simon also hoped the State Government would discuss with the MTUC on job prospects, with a guarantee that locals would be given priority during the implementation of the Sabah Development Corridor.

He pointed out that the increasing influx of migrant workers into the State could result in the exodus of young local workers to the peninsula, Singapore and Brunei in search for better jobs.

At the same time, the relevant authorities should monitor employers who were reluctant to comply with the provisions of the Sabah Labour Act, in terms of welfare, security protection, EPF contributions and overtime payments, he said.

Simon assured that MTUC would continue to work in the interest of the Malaysian workers, to ensure they would not be exploited by the imbalance, under this year's theme, Globalisation Erodes the Rights of Workers (Globalisasi Menghapus Hak Pekerja) such as subjecting them to being laid off or retrenched through the MSS or VSS.

Many Sabah workers earning less than RM600, says MTUC

KOTA KINABALU: Sabah still has a big number of local workers who are earning less than RM600 a month which is the ceiling for poverty line in the State, said Malaysian Trade Union Congress (MTUC) Sabah Chairman Simon Yayun Lamadas.

He said these workers are employed in hotels, catering, public transport and security service sectors.

"This situation is discouraging and as such, the Government ought to consider the appeal made by MTUC to improve the livelihood of these workers who are still living below the poverty line," said Simon in his message in conjunction with the Labor Day Holiday today.

Simon said it is very disheartening that 50 years after attaining Independence, the country still has a huge number of local workers living in poverty.

MTUC, he said, has been asking the Government to set a minimum monthly wage for workers at RM900 and the Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) at RM300 per month.

"Unfortunately, the Government has not responded positively to the request until today," he lamented.

According to Simon, it is high time the Government agrees with the MTUC's proposal in the face of escalating prices of essential goods in the country, with prices going up to 30 per cent in the rural areas.

He also urged the State Government to include the MTUC in any discussions or forums about matters relating to employment opportunities, particularly with the implementation of the Sabah Development Corridor (SDC).

"We must bear in mind that the

■Continued in A2

May 2008

MTUC: State of affairs for workers, trade unions unfortunate

KUALA LUMPUR: The state of affairs of workers and trade unions in the country can be described as unfortunate, according to Malaysian Trade Union Congress President Syed Shahir Syed Mohamud.

In his Labour Day address, Syed Shahir said trade unionism, like many other civil institutions in the country, had been under relentless attack by policies which favoured the rich.

He said the contribution of workers towards the country's success could not be denied but there had been little attempt to accord a fair slice of the pie of economic progress to them.

"We are experiencing a global phenomenon of rising food prices, which threatens to put large numbers of people in a state of poverty.

"We see the level of real wages diminished, despite rising profits by

businesses and the trampling of human rights, although the world is experiencing a period of unprecedented economic growth," he said.

Syed Shahir believed the reason was a continuous neglect of all areas of social development, with the main and sometimes sole emphasis being the economic advancement of the minority who controlled the economy.

"The concept of the free market based on its original intent has failed. We do not live in a world where enterprising individuals can reap success through industry and hard work.

"We live in a world where neo-liberal globalisation has dictated that monopolies and oligopolies control the global economy," he said.

However, he said, he was not

arguing against any global expansion of trade, but insisted that any trade growth and economic expansion must benefit the workers of the world.

"What we have seen is a growth which has only benefited the owners of businesses and which has increased the income divide.

"If the income divide issue are not solved, this would only cause social issues which would then take decades to unravel," he said.

Syed Shahir said the masses were being affected in the name of competitive advantage of nations and that real income levels were falling with more people now living in relative poverty.

On minimum wage, he said it had been encouraged for too long and it was morally wrong to deny the people a minimum standard of living.