

TRADE UNIONS IN MALAYSIA: THE WAY FORWARD

Tq Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegate, Sister and Brother,

On behalf of the Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC), I wish to share our sincere thanks for provide opportunities in today's session. For the MTUC, today's conference is vital at a time when the whole world is facing a most difficult situation in the history of the world, especially from the point of view of health and the future of workers, as they need constant advocacy in all aspects of life.

Like other countries, Malaysia has not 'escaped' from the toughest challenges of the century, especially after the World War II. This, among others, was caused by the COVID-19, the world's worst pandemic that was not expected by us at all.

The impact of the pandemic that hit Malaysia since the mid of January 2020 is being felt drastically by workers in both the formal and informal sectors. As we could not deny the positive impact caused by the COVID-19 at certain levels, but the opposite effects are very tragic, especially in terms of loss of life, declining employment opportunities and socio-economic downturn.

The COVID-19 pandemic has completely changed the labour situation in Malaysia. Trade unions in Malaysia are struggling to cope with the impact of COVID-19. In-line with the efforts being taken by the Government, the

union leadership is also step-up its actions and initiatives aimed at assisting the workers and their members.

Trade unions in Malaysia is approaching 80 years, workers continue to face various issues and challenges that require holistic solutions. Today the number of union members is only about 8% of the workforce much lower than the 16 million employees in our country. Although the population and comparatively those who participating in the labour sector increased strongly, but the number of workers becoming union members is still low.

MTUC proposing that union membership be made mandatory for every worker, and every worker had a right to be represented by the union in employment issues. Malaysia's aim to achieve a high-income nation not only needed quality workers but also quality employers as the workers wellbeing and dignity were important for increased productivity.

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the need for employers to provide appropriate working protection for the workers, including conducive housing facilities for every worker either local and foreign workers, formal and informal workers.

WE would like to thank the Government, especially the Ministry of Human Resources Malaysia, for enforcing the law of the living conditions of workers especially the foreign workers and also to the employers to comply with the Workers' Minimum Standards of Housing and Amenities Act 1990.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, need to be stressed here that trade unions leadership faces challenges in many ways. Not only to lead the trade union in a more dynamic way in a challenging environment, but also look after the interests of the workers at large.

The latest pandemic has led to the closure of five trade unions in Malaysia. We are concerned that this number will increase in coming months. This is a very tragic development to the effort to defend the interests of workers as the number of employees who show interest and keen to join a trade union is dwindling.

MTUC is committed to join hands with the Government and employers to strengthen the tripartite spirit, but at the same time we will continue to safeguard the interest of the workers at all level, at all times and enhance the protections for them in a holistic manner, for their betterment and also for the nation building.

Presented by
Mohd Effendy bin Abdul Ghani
Deputy President MTUC