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MTUC slams Kula for tabling 'unsuitable' labour laws

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Page 1 of 2

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➤ Congress also accuses 'aggressive' minister of 'misleading statements'

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PETALING JAYA: The Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) has slammed Human Resources Minister M. Kulasegaran for tabling what it described as "unsuitable" labour laws in Parliament.

It said the minister had taken an "aggressive approach" in dealing with private sector worker representatives by refusing to allow the National Labour Advisory Council (NLAC) to discuss and reach a joint resolution on proposed amendments to the Industrial Relations Act 1967.

"Hence his claim that his ministry has engaged the MTUC and Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) - the two main constituents of the NLAC - is misleading," congress said.

The ministry yesterday refuted claims by MTUC and MEF that they were not consulted over the proposed amendments that have

since been tabled and passed in the Dewan Rakyat.

The ministry said officials from the Department of Industrial Relations and Department of Trade Unions had also taken part in dialogues organised by MTUC to explain the proposed amendments to the Industrial Relations Act 1967 and the Trade Unions Act 1959, as well as obtain the necessary feedback.

The ministry also pointed out that it did not need the "endorsement" of the groups, adding that it had held nine meetings with them under the NLAC this year alone to discuss various issues, including amendments to labour laws.

MTUC said while Kulasegaran's stand was that the ministry was not duty-bound to get any form of endorsement from the NLAC as the International Labour Organisation Convention 144 on Tripartite Consultation (C144) only "expresses consultation and not endorsement", such social dialogues must also be "effective and meaningful".

In other words, MTUC said, the social partners should be given equal footing in decision-making with the government.

"Our stand is that the NLAC was never used as an effective forum of consultation on the labour law reforms as intended by C144.

"We also stand by our statement that the minister undermined the NLAC and unilaterally handed a set of bad laws to Parliament for approval on Oct 7 and 9," MTUC said, adding such attempts only hardened its resolve to engage with Dewan Negara senators to return the IRA amendments to the NLAC.

MTUC then accused Kulasegaran of issuing misleading statements and failing to respond to its demand that the minutes of the NLAC meeting are made public.

"By making public the minutes, or at least providing the media access to them, the public can easily judge if indeed 'effective and meaningful' consultations were carried out by the ministry in accordance with C144, which the ministry refers to.

"All the spin put on the various statements churned out by Kulasegaran and his officials have failed to debunk this," it said.

The nation's largest labour movement also said proposed law amendments did not reflect the wishes or aspirations of its respective members and affiliates.

"Some of the amendments will also lead to disharmony among unions and cause chaos in the companies which forsake the rights of workers to pursue collective agreements with employers effectively," it said.



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Page 2 of 2

SUMMARIES

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