

Some out to depoliticise MTUC

PETALING JAYA: If the words of Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) deputy president Mohd Khalid Atan are anything to go by, the labour organisation is now led by a trade unionist who refuses to listen.

"The main criteria of a leader is to listen. If you don't listen, how can people share their grouses with you? If you don't listen, how can you help to solve their problems?" he said at MTUC's delegates conference at Jalan Templer, here yesterday.

For the record Khalid, of the Timber Industry Employees Union, is vying for the presidency against its incumbent, Syed Shahir Syed Mohamud in MTUC's triennial elections today.

The central issue has been the affiliation of Syed Shahir and his running mate, Abdullah Sani Abdul Hamid, with Parti Keadilan Rakyat.

Syed Shahir is the deputy chief of Selangor PKR while Abdullah, who is contesting the secretary-general's post being vacated by veteran G. Rajasekaran, is the MP for Kuala Langkat.

Khalid is one of those hoping to depoliticise MTUC.

He said the congress must continue to fight for workers' rights and remain apolitical, in response to a question on whether the political stand of some members had an effect on the congress' struggles.

"We don't want to be under the influence of any party. However, for some, because they are under a par-

ty, whatever they fight for becomes a political agenda and the struggles of the congress becomes number two against their struggles for their own party," he said.

Although Khalid did not name anyone, he was probably referring to Syed Shahir of the National Union of Transport Equipment and Allied Industries Workers and Abdullah.

The minimum wage issue is the topmost agenda for Syed Shahir.

Syed Shahir, who professed high confidence that the government will implement the minimum wage policy next year, said that the inclusion of different party supporters within the leadership would not have any effect on the agendas championed by MTUC.

"When it boils down to it, we are all workers and our main focus is in championing for workers rights and benefits," he said.

"MTUC has more than 500,000 members and we are all voters. We may support different parties but we all share the same stand on workers' issues."

Other important things on MTUC's agenda include amendments to the various labour legislation, resolving the migrant workers problem, the setting up of a pension fund for private sector workers, and other matters concerning wages, bonuses and work conditions.

MTUC will be holding its elections today, which will see 552 delegates from 121 workers unions voting for their representatives.



MTUC deputy president Mohd Khalid Atan (left) is vying for the presidency against incumbent, Syed Shahir Syed Mohamud (right) in MTUC's triennial elections today. — NST picture by Yazit Razali