

'Increase minimum wage to RM1,500'

RM900 is 'nothing these days', union leader tells Government

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PETALING JAYA: The Government should consider increasing the minimum wage from RM900 to RM1,500 soon to avoid risking workers' welfare and subsequently, their performance.

Transport Workers Union secretary-general Tan Sri Zainal Rampak said RM900 (RM800 in Sabah and Sarawak) was insufficient currently, considering the high cost of living.

"RM900 is nothing these days, especially for workers who have families to feed.

"This have made them miserable. All they think now is how to sustain their families, including schoolgoing children, with the small income," he told *The Star*.

The former Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) president, said the RM900 figure was mooted by him in 2002, but was only implemented 11 years later.

"The amount was appropriate then, but is too little now."

Zainal also took MTUC to task for not doing enough for the workers, adding that it was a

"toothless" organisation that was now a pale shadow of its former self a decade ago.

He added that currently some 40% of employers were not observing the RM900 minimum wage, and called on the Government to look into the matter and come down hard on these errant employers.

Zainal also called on express bus companies to ensure more drivers were permanent employees, instead of contract workers.

Contract drivers are not entitled to Employees Provident Fund and Social Security Organisation contributions from the employer, as well as other benefits under the Employment Act, which leaves these drivers with no choice but to work extra shifts and make extra trips to make ends meet.

He said the union had highlighted these issues to the relevant ministries.

"But these have all landed on deaf ears," he claimed.

The Human Resources Ministry, he said, should start recognising the National Level Workers Advisory Council, and meetings between the two should be conducted at least once every quarter.