



**Secretary General's Labour Day Message**  
**“Workers’ Rights are Human Rights - Labour Day 2018”**

On behalf MTUC General Council, I wish all affiliates, their members, and all workers in Malaysia and globally a happy and promising Labour Day 2018.

Since the announcement of Labour Day in 1972, capitalist have slowly and successfully denounced the importance of Labour Day to an extent, today, people are looking at Labor Day as another public holiday day without realising the importance and significance of Labor Day.

Briefly, the significance of Labour Day is the Haymarket massacre. After the Depression of 1873-1879 there was rapid expansion of industrialisation in the United States and Chicago was a major industrial centre where thousands of Germans and Bohemian immigrants were employed. Workers worked on average slightly over 60 hours during a six-day workweek. Though the city became a centre for many attempts to organize labor's demands for better working conditions but the employers responded with anti-union activities. Employers reacted by firing and blacklisting union members, locking out workers, recruiting new workers to counter strikes, engaging spies and gangsters, employing private security forces and inflaming racial tensions in order to divide the workers. This same employer tactics is still happening to this very day, just in different forms and sophisticated manner.

On 1st of May 1886 the Workers prepared for a general strike in support of the “eight-hour workday with no cut in pay” and thousands throughout the country participated in the strike. On 4th May during a public assembly and unknown man threw a bomb and the police started firing and that led to the death of 4 workers and 9 policemen while a total of 130 were injured.

**Importance of 1st of May**

Thereafter, 1st of May became International Workers' Day to commemorate the 1886 Haymarket massacre. The remarkable outcome from the 1886 incident was the recognition of guarantee basic right of 8 hours work. People sacrificed their lives to stop the exploitation by employers, from their death we are benefiting lawful 8 hours of work per day, a public holiday on 1st May without cut in salary.



On this coming, 1st May, let us come together to remember and commemorate workers solidarity to achieve justice for fellow workers and the future generation, globally. We have to be more united to fight for our rights and to have a labor movement for our collective benefit.

The current exploitation by the free-market capitalism demands us to be more united and understanding the importance of having a labour movement for the benefit of workers and not for individuals personal interest.

We must remember that labour encompasses every aspect of our lives. A father, mother, son, daughter, grandfather and grandmother are all workers, working to support themselves and the family. We are also the largest consumers. As workers, we contribution to the society, yet, Labour is accorded the importance it deserves; on the other hand, our rights are eroding. The stand taken by the World Bank recently is clear evidence of capitalists' rule.

### **Build Strong Solidarity**

If you recall, on 20 October 1947 was a sacred date for Malaya. It was a day; the population of Malaya exercised their strong democratic rights. The Pusat Tenaga Rakyat (PUTERA) and the All Malayan Council of Joint Action (AMCJA) called for a Hartal in entire Malaya to demand for an independent country. Hartal is basically a general strike that brought Malaya to stand still. It was successful because everyone worked together, not only the leftists but also various organizations, including trade associations, workers and everyone with different ideologies.

Twenty years later in 1967, Hartal resurfaced when Penang lost her free port status there was sentiments of rage and dissatisfaction were mounting among the people.

### **Workers, together, united are the biggest source of power and strength.**

This is the reason the Capitalist work so hard to keep us apart. Sometimes with the help of some the workers themselves and leaders.

We need to reverse this, we need to be free from this form of capitalists control. Today, there is not much different from the colonial times as the capitalists' have increased their corporate greed.



Malaysia is one of the fastest growing developing countries but unfortunately the lives of the majority workers are living on high borrowed incomes whilst a small group of people live lavishly and big corporations have taken over the economy and with-it wealth and income inequality has grown.

In 1947 and 1969 there was no technologies such as smartphones, internet and social media for people united and shook the nation for a good cause, for independence and livelihood.

In this era of technology, we get information with a snap of the finger, all the more, we should be able to come together in solidarity. Our thoughts must change; 2018 must be a year of change, 2018 must be the year when we come together in unity to reclaim the pride of workers for better livelihood in Malaysia for all. Workers strength and power must be regained, the influence and decision-making power for workers must be regained.

**We must build back that strong, undivided, unbiased solidarity today. We may have different ideologies but when it comes to “workers”, we must come be together.**

We will need to rise up to be true unionists to protect Workers’ rights, despite being enveloped with multiple challenges threatening the independence and the relevance of Workers’ Rights. If we do not regain the power level for Malaysian workers then it would mean the Trade Union leaders have failed the trade union movement in this country and this will cause the demise of the Labour movement in Malaysia. So, let us with all our heart and soul do justice to our children, grandchildren, our future generation and build an equitable future for all.

We shall rise up as true unionist to protect Workers’ rights on Labour Day 2018 shaking off the challenges curbing the independence and the relevance of Workers’ Rights. We shall overcome them as a united force. Let us come together at Wisma MTUC on 1st May at 8.00am to begin rebuilding the Malaysian Labour Movement.

Happy 2018 Labour Day to the Workers of the World.

**J SOLOMON  
SECRETARY GENERAL  
MALAYSIAN TRADES UNION CONGRESS**