

PM: STRIKE WILL HIT RECOVERY

**SPECIAL
REPORT
PAY CUT,
ANYONE?**

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — Malaysia's economic recovery may be put back indefinitely if Cuepacs proceeds with its proposed strike over the civil servants' wage claims on July 15, the Prime Minister said today.

Consequently, the "whole country will have to pay the price", he said, adding that the proposed strike could further burden the people who are already facing a lot of difficulties.

"It will put back (economic) recovery... I don't know for how many months or years," Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad told reporters after opening a seminar on "Malaysia's Biography" at the University of Malaya here.

The Prime Minister certain that the pro-

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recovery, did not discount the possibility of a delay in future salary revisions for civil servants.

He said the proposed strike should be seen as a common problem affecting both the Government and the people. "The whole nation will have to face it (repercussions of the strike) because it does not affect the Government alone."

Saying that he was speaking in plain lan-

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guage "because it is the truth", Dr Mahathir said: "When we had the money, we did not even wait for them to ask. In 1980, we revised their wages because we had the money.

"But now, we don't have the money. I have spoken to their leaders, both past and present (about the Government's inability to revise wages), but I seem to have made no impact."

The Prime Minister said it was not fair for the

of the economy to sacrifice for those in the public sector. This was because the Government was responsible for the welfare and interests of the entire population and not merely select groups.

"I think we have already distributed (the nation's wealth) fairly and I don't think it is fair to ask people who have already sacrificed to sacrifice further."

Asked if the Government intended to bring in volunteers to man departments providing essential services if the strike materialised, he said the Government would have no choice but to do so.

"We will have to take all measures possible to keep the Government going."

On whether he would be meeting Cuepacs leaders over the wage issue, Dr Mahathir said nothing would come out of such a meeting. "There is nothing I can do."

He said Cuepacs expected him to accept its views on the wage issue "which I have listened to. I find there is no change. It is not I who does not want to settle this problem. This problem e we don't have the money."

Bringing forward the May 15 date for the resumption of talks between Cuepacs and the Government would not solve the problem either, he added.

Asked what could be the ultimate solution to the wage claims issue, he said: "Look at Singapore. Look at their unions." He did not elaborate.

The Prime Minister also reiterated his earlier appeal to civil servants to consider the plight of the unemployed, especially those in the tin mining and electronics industries.

The unemployment situation was further compounded by the inability of about 5,000 graduates to obtain jobs.

Bureaucracy

Civil servants, on the other hand, should count their blessings as the Government had not carried out retrenchment exercises or suspended annual increments.

Dr Mahathir urged civil servants not to feel the Government was unduly harsh or inconsiderate in rejecting their claims.

Asked if he foresaw the possibility of the Government trimming the 860,000-strong bureaucracy in future to overcome difficulties in meeting wage increases, he said this might not come about.

"We are not trying to penalise them. What we can do is privatise parts of the Government so that the civil servants will not lose a cent of what they are earning now."