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Mahathir-Allowance

ALLOWANCE HIKE FOR TOP CIVIL SERVANTS IS FAIR, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, July 22 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today described the increase in allowances for top government officers as very fair and urged Cuepacs not to question their right to better perks.

"I think it (the increase) is not high. It is not right if we raise the salary of the lower group without doing the same for those at the top.

"We should be concerned only with what we are getting ourselves. Just as we do not want people to put sand in our rice bowl, we should not put sand in others' rice bowl," he told reporters after opening Hotel Nikko Kuala Lumpur here.

He was commenting on Cuepacs' objections to the government's decision to give better allowances and incentives to Special Grade and Top Management Group civil servants, who include medical officers, dental officers, engineers, architects, quantity surveyors and accountants.

The better perks, which took effect on Jan 1 this year, are aimed at checking the brain drain of professionals from the civil service to the private sector.

Dr Mahathir said the payment of the incentives did not involve any long-term commitment by the government because only allowances were increased and not the basic pay.

Moreover, the increase involved only a small number of officers (about 10,000) compared to the salary adjustment for more than 800,000 civil servants implemented on Jan 1 last year, he said.

"Allowance does not involve pension payment. But the salary increase for those in the lower category will involve pension payment. Furthermore, officers in the lower category also get overtime allowance," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he in fact was prepared to recommend a higher increase in allowance for the top officers because their role was crucial in determining the success of the country's development.

The government was indebted to them because they had diligently implemented all policies and directives although their salary could not match that of their counterparts in the private sector and several countries, especially Singapore, he said.

Dr Mahathir said the government was losing efficient officers to the private sector which made lucrative offers.

"Officers who choose to remain do so out of loyalty. Are we supposed to neglect people who are loyal?" he said.

He said some senior officers had also chosen to continue serving the government after their retirement when they could get better salary by joining the private sector.

The increased allowance and perks are enjoyed by about 800 officers in the Top Management Group (superscale "C"/special grade "C" and above).

In addition, 9,136 more officers in Grade 1 and 2 received an increase in fixed housing allowance. -- BERNAMA

AH YBY