

19 OCT 1996
Mahathir-Bonus
BONUS FOR GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES?

SERENDAH, Oct 19 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today indicated the government's willingness to give bonus to government servants this year.

He said that in principle the government had promised to pay bonus if it could afford to do so.

This was consistent with the privatisation policy aimed at reducing the size of the civil service so that government servants can enjoy better salary and benefits, he said.

"Let's wait. If we are fortunate there will be a bonus, otherwise none," he told reporters after inspecting the Taman Bunga Raya low-cost housing project in Bukit Beruntung, near here.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, who is Finance Minister, had said on Thursday that he would announce whether bonus would be paid when he tables the 1997 Budget on Oct 25.

Dr Mahathir jokingly said: "This is all because of Datuk Seri Anwar. I agreed to pay one-year bonus but I would not know. So don't blame me."

However, in a serious tone, the Prime Minister said: "I can't say. It is up to the Minister of Finance when he makes his announcement."

Dr Mahathir was also asked to comment on the bill being debated in Parliament which seeks to increase the salaries of the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Ministers, Deputy Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries and allowances of MPs and senators.

He said although his present salary (RM17,000) was deemed high, the fact remains that it is lower than those of top officers of Petronas which comes under the Prime Minister's Department.

"I have to look after many things and take care of more people but their salaries are bigger than mine," he said.

In Ipoh, Cuepacs secretary-general Siva Subramaniam said it had asked for a two-month bonus in a request submitted to the Finance Ministry on Oct 10.

The government should consider the request in view of the heavier responsibility shouldered by government servants and their increasing productivity and performance following the implementation of the ISO 9000 standard, he said.

He told reporters this after Deputy Finance Minister Datuk Wong See Wah opened the 11th biennial delegates conference and golden jubilee celebrations of the Peninsular Malaysia Customs Officers Union here.

"The claim is meant to ease the burden of government workers in view of the increasing cost of living. It will also help them meet the year-end expenses for the new school session and the Hari Raya Puasa and Chinese New Year celebrations," he said.

Siva said the claim would not burden the government because the national economy was strong and many government departments had already been privatised.

However, he could not say how much it will cost the government to meet Cuepacs' request.

He said it was a fair request considering that some private companies were paying between three and six months' bonus.

For the past two years the government paid a one-month bonus subject to a minimum of RM500. -- BERNAMA

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