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Mahathir-Cuepacs (With pix)

UNFAIR TO DENY SENIOR GOVT SERVANTS PAY REVISION, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 9 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today it was unfair to entertain the notion that senior government servants did not deserve bonus and a salary revision.

They too contributed to the government coffers from which the money came to pay salaries and bonus for all government staff, by paying income tax which was "no mean sum," he added.

"If we do not take into account the heavier responsibilities and workload they shoulder without being paid overtime, it is not fair," he said when opening the 20th Convention of Cuepacs at Wisma MCA here.

Dr Mahathir said the government's money was not only meant to pay the salaries of its staff but also to meet the needs of the people, including the poor.

The RM3 billion allocated for the salary revision, including RM1 billion for bonus payment last year, could be used to build 600 schools, 7,500 rural clinics or 2,000 km of kampung roads, he added.

He said the government offered RM2 billion for the salary revision because that was what it was able to afford.

"As such, please accept the government proposal," he added.

Dr Mahathir was referring to the salary revision sought by Cuepacs which initially submitted a claim of RM3 billion, excluding payment of one month's bonus of RM1 billion.

The government rejected the claim and Cuepacs submitted another proposal involving RM2 billion under a formula in which an increase of between 29 and 41 percent was proposed for the lower-income group (previously Group D), 12 to 15 percent for Group C, and eight to 10 percent for Group B. The three groups are now categorised under the Support Group.

The proposed increase for the management and professional group (previously Group A) was 2.5 to 5.8 percent.

In explaining the government's financial position, Dr Mahathir said the surplus of income over expenditure in 1995 totalled RM3.5 billion.

Of the amount, RM1 billion was given as one month's bonus last year and RM2 billion was set aside for payment of arrears of adjustment in salaries back-dated to Jan.1, 1995.

"The total is RM3 billion, that is, 86 percent of the total tax collected from companies and high-income earners," he added.

Almost all the low-income earners, including government staff, were not taxable, he said.

Dr Mahathir said the increase in salaries was being paid to government staff who make up only four percent of the population.

Saying that the government was a considerate one, he called on Cuepacs not to be too hard in pressuring the government and imposing conditions.

He hoped the convention would not be used as a forum taken up by the perception of injustice to government servants and freedom of workers.

He wanted the Cuepacs delegates to debate the concept of confrontation and threats which formed the basis of labour rights conjured by the West.

-- BERNAMA