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Cuepacs asks to be in wage study team

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Cuepacs wants to be part of the team that carries out the Government's comparative wage study of the civil and private services as a guideline to assess future salary demands.

Welcoming Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's statement on the study, Cuepacs president Mohamad Mat Jid said the move was commendable as this would give a better indication on wage disparity in both sectors.

"We hope the Public Services Department will invite Cuepacs to give inputs for the study," he said.

Yesterday, Dr Mahathir said the Government was doing the study to determine whether the salaries of civil servants was inadequate to meet the cost of living as claimed by certain quarters.

Initial findings revealed that civil servants at lower and middle level were better paid than their counterparts in the private sector if their perks, including pension, were taken into account.

The salary of high-ranking civil servants was comparatively lower than executives in the private sector, Dr Mahathir said.

The Prime Minister said the Government was sometimes placed in a difficult position because the unions were making new demands.

However, Cuepacs secretary-general N. Sivasubramaniam felt that public sector employees' wages were lower than their counterparts in the private sector.

"It has become very difficult to recruit people to work in the civil service, particularly in the lower- and middle-income group, due to the low wages," he claimed.

"Many are shying away from the civil service as the remuneration provided is not attractive," he said.

Sivasubramaniam said there was a critical shortage of drivers right up to heart specialists, a trend that is worrying the congress.

An individual with five credits in his Sijil Persekolahan Malaysia examination can earn RM760 a month working in a bank, but the same individual, after having gone through a 30-month training stint at a Teacher's Training College, will only earn RM600 in the public service.

"We agree with the Prime Minister on the study but we have to look into these things in detail," he said.

Citing another example, Sivasubramaniam said although the PSD approved the application by the Education Ministry to employ another 14,000 employees, there has not been many applications.

Two weeks ago, PSD director-general Datuk Dr Mazlan Ahmad said 130,000 vacancies in the public sector, particularly in the professional and technical fields, were unfilled.

There was a critical shortage of doctors, engineers, architects and pilots.

Sivasubramaniam said one of the reasons why many employees left the civil service was the introduction of the New Remuneration System in 1992.

Prior to the introduction of the NRS, there were 300 job categories in the service but now, the entire service is divided into 19 categories.

"This caused much dissatisfaction among civil servants," he claimed.

Sivasubramaniam said another factor was the move to freeze optional retirement for teachers and assistant nurses.

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