

PAY CUTS FOR DELAYS

S 4.7.98

Help private sector to help yourselves, PM tells govt staff

By WAN HAMIDIHAMID

KUALA LUMPUR: Civil servants have been told to speed up approvals for applications from the private sector or run the risk of pay cuts as delays may mean lower taxes, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

The Prime Minister said the Government relied heavily on the private sector for revenue which was used to pay the 850,000-odd civil servants among other expenditures.

Dr Mahathir also warned that if the nation failed to overcome the deteriorating economic situation in due course, the Government might be forced to ask the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for help.

He said it was vital that the government employees worked harder to improve efficiency especially at a time when the economic situation was affecting government revenue.

"Last time, lots of companies paid taxes to the Government. There was one (firm) which recorded a profit of RM2bil and at 28% corporate tax, the Government obtained RM560mil," he said, adding that the money was also for services and development of the nation.

Speaking at the presentation of excellent service awards to 227 staff of the Prime Minister's Department here yesterday, Dr Mahathir said the Government usually did not retrench its employees but if the downturn worsened, their salaries might have to be reduced.

"This however can be avoided if civil

servants work harder and faster. For example, if it usually takes a month to approve an application, we must do it within a week or in two days or even one day.

"I'm sure it doesn't involve lots of work. I urge all officers and employees to work harder and if possible work overtime because it (such a sacrifice) is no longer for the Government only but for ourselves," he said.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia at the moment was lucky not to be under the thumb of the IMF.

"But if the nation failed to overcome the situation, the Government might have to ask the IMF for help."

Dr Mahathir said if the IMF came in, it would only burden the people because the only

remedy it prescribed was to close down any company or agency which it considered had failed.

"The IMF only wants to close down companies regardless of what will happen to the workers. If it controls the country, it will want us to reduce spending. That means salary cuts, retrenchments, closing down of companies and government agencies which it considers unimportant.

"It is not concerned about the suffering of the people brought about by its action. What is important to it is the country must reduce spending," said Dr Mahathir.

He cited the example of Indonesia which was left with 24 million people unemployed after the IMF stepped in, adding that the figure was more than Malaysia's population of 22 million.