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Parliament-winding

BONUS: GOVERNMENT FEELS PAYMENT NECESSARY BUT CAN'T AFFORD IT

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 11 (Bernama) -- The Dewan Rakyat was told today that the government feels the bonus should be paid to the 800,000 public servants but it does not have the means to make such payment.

Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Fauzi Abdul Rahman said although many groups had asked the government to consider the bonus payment, it could not be implemented yet.

"It's difficult for the government to consider (the payment of bonus) because of the economic downturn and our capability is limited although the government feels it is necessary to pay the bonus," he said when winding up the debate on the 1999 Supply Bill at the committee stage pertaining to the Prime Minister's Department.

During the debate, several members of parliament had urged the government to consider the payment of bonus and suggested that if the government could not afford full payment, it should pay half bonus or think of other incentives which were not disclosed.

In this context, he said, a date was being scheduled for a meeting between Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Cuepacs on the payment of bonus.

On the complaints by members that the parliament administration was not efficient and the equipment in the house such as the audio and messaging system near the seat of each member were not functioning, he said action on the matter was being taken by the parliament administration.

Several members of parliament were not satisfied with the reply and stood up simultaneously to seek further clarification.

"This is not an old issue, the problem of late distribution of handsard had been brought up repeatedly and similar replies were being given every year," said Ruhanie Ahmad (BN-Parit Sulong).

During the debate, Dr Nungsari Ahmad Radhi (BN-Balik Pulau) and Mohamad Sabu (PAS-Kubang Kerian) raised the issue of late distribution of the handsard to members of parliament.

Both members questioned why the handsard could not be distributed earlier and said that the reply that there was not enough staff was an old one.

"The handsard is no longer a handsard but history. Today in history...this is what is happening in parliament now. It's difficult for us to know what our colleagues said yesterday as the handsard which we receive today is the one meant for three or four days earlier.

On the audio system at the members' seats, Fauzi said the system would be able to be used soon.

Ruhanie again stood up and said: "Previously they said one more year (it can be used), now a year has passed. If it cannot be used, just pull them out."

Datuk Badruddin Amiruldin (BN-Yan) also asked the parliament administration to change the chairs in the Press Room which he said were old.

"I pass by the Press Room and I see the springs coming out from some chairs. I understand there were reporters who had their pants ripped by the spring," he said looking at the press box in the house.

Earlier, Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (JPM) Datuk Nazri Aziz who was also winding up the debate for the JPM said the government did not encourage demonstrations to be held as they could create

tension.

"The government is determined that the racial riots of 1969 will not be repeated.

"Thus the Internal Security Act (ISA) will not be repealed as long as the opposition was inciting the people," he said.

On the suggestion by Lim Kit Siang (DAP-Tanjong) that a general election be held as soon as possible, Nazri said: "The people know that when they elected their representatives in 1995, it is for a period of five years."

The house will sit again tomorrow.

-- BERNAMA

NZ AO