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LEAD Anwar-Bonus

BONUS: GOVT WILL PAY SECOND INSTALMENT, SAYS ANWAR

KUALA LUMPUR, March 3 (Bernama) -- Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said today the second instalment of the one-month bonus for civil servants for last year will be paid next month as promised.

"(There is) no delay...the Cabinet has endorsed that," Anwar, who is also Finance Minister, told reporters, here.

He said the Cabinet had agreed that payment for the second instalment of the bonus would be made in April as agreed in the 1998 Budget.

Earlier today, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the balance of the one-month-salary bonus for civil servants, due in April, would be paid as long as the government was able to do so.

Dr Mahathir was responding to reporters who approached him on the matter during his visit to the Limkokwing Institute of Creative Technology in Petaling Jaya.

Dr Mahathir said he would leave it to Anwar to decide on the matter.

The prime minister said: "Bonus is not delayed pay, bonus is given when we have enough income.

He said it was wrong for some people to think that the bonus was a right.

"A bonus is not a right, but is (some sort of) returns based on our contribution (to the organisation or company) and which the situation allowed for it to be paid out."

The prime minister said if bonus was regarded as a right, then it would just be delayed payment.

In such a case, bonus would not serve as an incentive, he said.

Meanwhile, Congress of Unions of Employees in the Public and Civil Service (Cuepacs) deputy secretary-general Abdul Rahman Manan welcomed Anwar's statement.

He said Cuepacs had expected the government to pay the bonus as promised.

He also said that Cuepacs would officially present to Public Services Department (PSD) Director-General Tan Sri Dr Mazlan Ahmad as soon as possible the proposal that its members contribute RM10 or one per cent of their bonus to help in the country's economic recovery.

The contribution was to show that members of the civil service also cared about the economic problems that the country was facing now, he said.

Cuepacs had not received any objections from its members to the proposal which was made at the meeting of the congress' committee on Feb 16, he added.

Anwar, when tabling this year's budget last October, announced a month's bonus or a minimum payment of RM700 for all civil servants except those in the top management group from Superscale C officers onwards.

The first instalment of the bonus was paid last December.

This was the fifth time that the government had given bonus to civil servants, including police and military personnel, in recognition of their contributions to national development and well-being.

The first was in 1993 when 850,000 civil servants were rewarded with a half-month bonus or a minimum of RM400.

The following year and 1995, the quantum was one month's salary or a minimum of RM600.

Again in 1996 a month's bonus or a minimum of RM700 for the lowest income group was paid out. -- BERNAMA

AFY AD AA RA JK