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Mahathir-bonus

GOVT WILL PAY CIVIL SERVICE BONUS IF AFFORDABLE, SAYS PM

PETALING JAYA, March 3 (Bernama) -- The balance of the one-month-salary bonus for civil servants, due in April, will be paid as long as the government is able to do so, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"But if we cannot afford it, how (are we) to pay?" he asked.

He was responding to reporters who approached him on the matter during his visit to the Limkokwing Institute of Creative Technology here.

Dr Mahathir said he would leave it to his deputy Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, who is also Finance Minister, to decide on the matter.

He was also asked whether, given the prevailing economic situation, the government could pay the second instalment of the one-month bonus pledged to civil servants.

Dr Mahathir said: "Bonus is not delayed pay, bonus is given when we have enough income.

He said it was wrong for some 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 case bonus would not serve as an incentive, he said.

The first instalment of the bonus in question was paid last December.

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

This was the fifth time that the government has 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 bonus of a half-month salary or a minimum of RM400.

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

Again it was a bonus of one month salary in 1996 or a minimum of RM700 for the lowest income group.

Meanwhile, reacting to the prime minister's statement, Cuepacs, the largest union representing public sector employees, said it was still hopeful the government would pay the second instalment of the bonus.

"Cuepacs understands the government's predicament in having to deal with the current economic woes...but we're still confident the government will pay the bonus," said Cuepacs deputy secretary-general Abdul Rahman Manan.

The bonus was an incentive for excellent performance by civil servants last year, Abdul Rahman told Bernama.

Asked what the union would do should the government fail to pay the balance of the bonus, he said Cuepacs would seek clarification from the Prime Minister and his deputy.

"We have to get an explanation for the members to know," he said.

According to him, at last month's meeting with Public Services Department director-general Tan Sri Dr Mazlan Ahmad, Cuepacs had proposed a one per cent or RM10 deduction from the second instalment of the civil servants' bonus.

Abdul Rahman said if all the 850,000 civil servants endorsed the proposal, RM8.5 million could be collected for a fund to help national economic recovery, he added. -- BERNAMA

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