

29/06/1999

Govt willing to consider Cuepacs' request, says PM

Kamarul Yunus

THE Government will look into a proposal to reduce the housing loan interest rate for civil servants but this will depend on the availability of funds, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

"If we can afford it, we will always try to help but our financial allocation becomes a problem," he told newsmen after launching the first MSC (Multimedia Super Corridor) Venture Capital fund in Cyberjaya yesterday.

Dr Mahathir was asked on the proposal by the Congress of Union of Employees in the Public and Civil Services (Cuepacs) to reduce the interest rate from the existing 4 per cent to 3 per cent.

"They (Cuepacs) can propose, and we will consider. If we are able to, we will try to help but the allocation is a problem," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the Federal Government will also try to reduce poverty in the country, including Kelantan, which is currently under Pas.

However, he noted that the opposition will harp on the financial assistance issue to provoke the people not to vote for Barisan Nasional (BN). He added that the Federal Government will still provide assistance even if they did not vote for BN.

"We will help. But the problem is when we help, the opposition will say if they do not support the Federal Government or BN, they can still get assistance ... so what is the point of voting for them.

"Now, they (opposition) are teaching the people not to be thankful or grateful to those who help them so that we (the Government) will not help them," he said.

Thus, Dr Mahathir said it not surprising to see Kelantan registering the highest poverty rate compared to other states.

"This is because the Kelantan Government is actually not focusing on problems relating to poverty and did not take any action to help the poor.

"It is true they are facing acute shortage of funds, but they should not have made promises to the people if they cannot afford to deliver what they had promised," he said.

When asked on the resignation of former Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Harris Salleh from Parti Bersekutu, Dr Mahathir said it was a good move and that Harris should concentrate on plantation and agriculture.

"He is very good in agriculture and forestry. I think one should stick to the area that one has expertise in," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said the Government always finds Harris quite erratic.

"We could not cooperate with him because we don't know what he will do next," he said.

Harris announced his resignation from Parti Bersekutu, the party he had been heading as acting president since March 29 last year. In a faxed statement in Kota Kinabalu, Harris said the resignation took effect on June 3 this year.

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