

05/03/1999

PSD to submit report on pay scheme soon

Hamisah Hamid

THE Public Services Department (PSD) is expected to present a report on salary adjustment for workers in statutory bodies to the Cabinet soon, Human Resources Minister Datuk Lim Ah Lek said.

The PSD is currently preparing the report after being directed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, through the Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Halim Ali at the Cabinet meeting two weeks ago. Meanwhile, Lim advised the unions' members to stop wearing protest tags while waiting for the PSD's report, which will be ready "very, very soon". The Prime Minister's directive came after Lim brought up the matter at the Cabinet meeting, as he had promised to the unions' leaders from the five statutory bodies.

Lim had met the union leaders from Lembaga Tabung Haji, Bank Simpanan Nasional, Armed Forces Fund Board, Employees Provident Fund and Social Security Organisation on February 23.

It was the first meeting that the unions had with the minister after they tried to get the same new salary adjustment for the statutory bodies' workers as enjoyed by their counterparts in the civil service the past four years.

"It was a fruitful discussion where I promised them, although it is not under my jurisdiction, that I will bring it up at the Cabinet.

"They also promised me not to take any action that threatens the Government," he said when asked to comment on the move to wear protest tags.

The unions, representing some 10,500 staff in the five statutory bodies, said that the employees were paid less than their colleagues in the public sector who are benefiting from the New Remuneration Scheme implemented on January 1 1996.

Lim said he sympathised with the plight of the workers, but had told them that taking action would not solve the matter.

Speaking at a news conference after opening a seminar on Occupational Hazards Associated with Computer Work in Shah Alam yesterday, Lim said the unions should stop wearing the protest tags and be patient while the PSD was completing its report.

He said the union leaders had given their word that they would not take any threatening action.

"So, they must keep to their promise as I want to resolve the issue as I am also one of the Cabinet members," he said.

Lim said he would understand the unions' action if he failed to keep his promise to bring the matter to the Cabinet, but pointed out that he had done so.

On whether the Prime Minister has given any deadline for the PSD to complete its report, Lim said: "No. But once the directive is given, it won't be very long. We have a very good Chief Secretary to the Government."

To another question, he said the unions had been informed of the Cabinet's decision one or two days after the meeting.

He said he was willing to see the unions again if they were not satisfied with the current development.

"I don't stop at that, I will follow it up. During yesterday (Wednesday)'s Cabinet meeting, I reminded the Chief Secretary (Abdul Halim) about the matter," he said.

Meanwhile, chairman of the joint council of unions of non-affiliated agencies, Encik Mohd Noor Abdullah, said they had not promised the minister that they would not wear protest tags.

"We only promised him that we will not picket," he told Business Times when met at the Malaysian Trades Union Congress' Biennial Delegates Conference in Petaling Jaya yesterday.

Mohd Noor said the employees of the statutory bodies will continue wearing the tags until the Government approved their demand for salary adjustments.

"We are not taking any threatening action ... it is only a form of reminder to the Government," he said.

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