

26/01/2000

Govt reviews Armed Forces allowances to attract applications

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THE Defence Ministry is reviewing 37 categories of allowances paid to military personnel to make it more attractive to join the Malaysian Armed Forces (ATM).

Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Abdul Razak said the ministry is studying the proposal, proposed by the ATM, to determine whether the allowances should be revised or maintained.

"The ATM have applied to the Government for a revision of 37 allowances paid to military personnel in line with prevailing conditions. I had a discussion with the ATM officials on Monday and they brought up the proposal to revise the allowances.

"Originally, there were 44 allowances in all but seven of them had been abolished and the Government is now considering the application submitted for revision of the remaining allowances," he told newsmen after attending the ministry's Hari Raya Aidil Fitri gathering with military non-commissioned officers (NCOs) in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

On the reasons for the revision of allowances, Najib said some of the allowances were introduced in the 1960s and the schemes are still being used today.

"Therefore some of the allowances are outdated and should be revised," he said.

He maintained that the Government will not ignore the problems faced by members of the Armed Forces.

On the contrary, he said the Government will continue to see that their welfare are looked after to boost their morale and turn the ATM into a credible force.

On categories of allowances affected, Najib said these include technical skill allowance, special duty allowance, travelling allowance and the allowance for high risk assignments.

Elaborating further Najib said the allowances are reviewed from time to time. For example, he said, the housing allowance for military personnel was reviewed about five years ago.

Earlier in his speech, Najib said the Lembaga Tabung Angkatan Tentera (LTAT) should assist military personnel and ex-servicemen to acquire affordable houses.

"They (LTAT) should build affordable houses for the military personnel ... not only develop housing schemes but also buy the houses and later sell them to the military personnel at an affordable price," he said.

Najib said he will look into the welfare of members of the Armed Forces, including the issue on allowances and will meet with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad soon to discuss the matter.

He also said it is difficult for him to give a commitment on the allowances as it involves policies and financial implications.

But, he said the country's present economic recovery made it possible for the ATM to submit such views and requests for Government consideration.

Najib also lauded a proposal from the NCOs during a dialogue session, urging the LTAT to set up factories to produce uniform and other accessories for the military personnel.

"This a good proposal. However, LTAT has to take into consideration various factors before setting up factories. "Currently the Armed Forces obtain their supply from other sources. We would also have to take into

consideration the livelihood of those suppliers who may also be an ex-serviceman," he said.

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