

05 DEC 2000

Mahathir-Prices

GOVT WILL ENSURE ENOUGH SUPPLY OF ESSENTIAL ITEMS, SAYS MAHATHIR

SHAH ALAM, Dec 5 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has assured the people that there will be ample supply of essential items during the coming festive season and that they should be able to buy them at reasonable prices.

"The government will ensure adequate supply of beef, chicken and other essential items and people should not buy at a higher price," he told reporters after inaugurating the Royal Mint of Malaysia, the country's first coin-minting company here.

He said this year's inflation rate hovered below three per cent and this low level of inflation indicated that by and large prices of goods in the country had not been raised despite the increase in the price of fuel.

However, Dr Mahathir said some unscrupulous people would still try to make some profit by raising prices during the festive period.

Hari Raya and Christmas will be celebrated at the end of the month followed by the Chinese New Year in January 2001.

Asked whether civil servants could expect bonus payment this year, Dr Mahathir said: "This you'll have to ask the Finance Minister (Tun Daim Zainuddin)...I would not know. If we have money we'll give the bonus, if there's no money we'll not give."

Asked whether civil servants could still expect some kind of compensation in lieu of bonus, he said: "The Finance Minister and I are considering this."

On the shortage of doctors, he said the reluctance of local doctors to serve with the government necessitated recruitment of foreign doctors who thought government doctors in Malaysia were already highly paid.

"We need more doctors and our own doctors do not want to work with the government. They prefer working in private hospitals for higher pay," he said.

Deputy Health Minister Datuk Seri Suleiman Mohamed told the Dewan Rakyat recently that the government had agreed to engage about 800 doctors from Indonesia, Bangladesh and Myanmar, among others.

Dr Mahathir urged the authorities to look into complaints that Malaysian doctors currently employed abroad and intending to return to work in the country faced difficulty in obtaining the mandatory medical practice certificate.

-- BERNAMA

MAM AHH RYN