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Najib-Allowance

MINDEF SEEKS TO INCREASE ALLOWANCES FOR SOLDIERS

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 25 (Bernama) -- The Malaysian Armed Forces (ATM) have applied to the government for a revision of 37 allowances paid to military personnel in line with prevailing conditions, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said today.

He said originally there were 44 allowances in all but seven of them had been abolished and the government was now considering the application submitted for revision of the remaining allowances.

Najib said some of the allowances were introduced since the 60's and were still applicable today and therefore were outdated and should be revised.

"The government would not ignore the problems faced by members of the armed forces. On the contrary, we will continue to see that their welfare are looked after to boost their morale and turn the ATM into a credible force," he said.

Najib said this when asked to comment on his speech at the Hari Raya gathering with military non-commissioned officers (NCOs) at di Wisma Bintara here.

He said there were many categories of allowances in the ATM such as technical skill allowance, special duty allowance, travelling allowance and the allowance for high risk assignment.

Asked when was the last revision for the allowances, Najib said they were reviewed from time to time, for example the housing allowance was reviewed about five years ago.

In his speech, the minister said he would look into the welfare of members of the armed forces including the issue on allowances and would meet with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad soon to discuss the matter.

Najib, who also heard the views of the NCOs during the dialogue session, said it was difficult for him to give a commitment on the allowances as they involved policies and financial implication.

He said the country's economic recovery made it possible for the ATM to submit such views and requests for government consideration.

Najib said he would emphasise on the ATM's development which would be total, integrated and comprehensive to create a credible and professional force and set up a defence system commensurate with the country's status as a developed nation in the year 2020.

"I'm convinced that the ATM as a disciplined force is always in support of the government which received the people's trust," he said.

He said he had proposed to the Armed Forces Superannuation Fund (LTAT) for the establishment of a fund to assist children of armed forces personnel who had potential to further their studies at tertiary level.

Najib was also asked on the delay in the completion of the Malaysian Military Academy (ATMA) campus in Sungei Besi which was first constructed in 1996 but was still not ready although it was scheduled to be completed early last year.

"The contractor faced a slight problem in terms of financing. But I understand the company has received additional loan and the project can be resumed," he said.

On the Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN) Recruit Training Centre (Pularek) in Tanjung Pengelih, Johor, which was badly damaged, Najib said it was caused by contractor failure and poor maintenance.

He said he was preparing a detailed report on the matter and it would be submitted to the cabinet.

-- BERNAMA

RV AO