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Dr Mahathir wants regular reports on JCC meetings

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today directed ministries and agencies to submit regular reports to him on meetings between them and unions in the civil service.

These joint consultative council meetings are an avenue to thrash out problems and find remedies, especially on matters affecting the service and the running of departments.

The Prime Minister issued the directive after Cuepacs president N. Siva Subramaniam claimed that 50 per cent of the JCCs were not functioning.

Dr Mahathir gave the reply in his speech at a gathering to mark Workers' Day at the National Institute of Public Administration in Bukit Kiara.

Siva Subramaniam had earlier in his speech claimed that the failure of half the JCCs to meet was not in line with the Prime Minister's wish to see closer ties between the Government and unions.

Later in a dialogue, a participant complained that the JCC at his department had not met for the last four years.

Among those present were Dr Mahathir's wife Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Human Resources Minister Datuk Dr Fong Chan Onn, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Tan Sri Bernard Dompok and Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Samsudin Osman.

Dr Mahathir said some people believed he would not have time to read the reports, nevertheless those involved should not be too worried.

"To those of you who believe that, just wait and see," he said to laughter from the audience.

He said the Chief Secretary to the Government would be asked to monitor the effectiveness of the JCCs.

The Prime Minister said he found out that things would generally improve if parties were required to submit reports to him.

For example, Dr Mahathir said, funds were better utilised by ministries and agencies after they were directed to submit reports on the matter every two weeks.

"Previously, they were slow in using funds allocated to them. But after the directive, there has been a marked improvement."

He said speedier utilisation of funds did not mean the Government was over-spending but it ensured projects that could help generate the economy were implemented.

Dr Mahathir reminded civil servants, especially those in charge of payments, to settle claims by companies and contractors.

In some cases, he said money was owed to contractors for more than a year.

"We want all ministries to pay up money owed to contractors fast.

"If work has been completed, please pay up. There should be no delay in paying the contractors.

"Even if only 50 per cent of a project is completed, we still pay (50 per cent). Don't delay payment because if we don't spend, the Government will lose out."

If contractors undertaking government projects were paid on time, their operations would not be affected, he said.

Although the Government had the funds, Dr Mahathir said, no benefit would be gained if the money was left idle or untouched as this would not generate any economic activities.

"Money will only have value if it is transacted. If someone has one

ringgit and buys things with it, the seller will make some gains.

"He later uses the money for some other purposes and other people will benefit, and this will go on."

Speaking to reporters later, Samsudin said heads of departments had been directed to set up the JCCs some time ago.

He admitted that the issue of the JCCs' non-performance had been raised many times before.

"I myself have many times asked for their co-operation. It looks like some of them have done it while others have yet to hold their meetings."

Samsudin said he would ask ministries and departments to submit reports to him on whether they had complied with the directive.

Contrary to common perception, Samsudin said not all issues raised by employees were related to salary and allowances.

Asked how frequently the JCCs should meet, Samsudin said it should be held at least three or four times a year.