

25 JUN 2001

Mahathir-Pensioners

GOVT READY TO PROVIDE TRAINING FOR POLICE AND ARMY PENSIONERS

KUALA LUMPUR, June 25 (Bernama) -- The government is ready to provide entrepreneurship training for police and army pensioners interested to enter the business world.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the government had identified various types of businesses which police and army pensioners could venture into especially those which are operated via franchise.

"Sometimes, we notice that their interest (police and army pensioners) is not in line with the business field they chose to go into as such they sometimes fail to continue," he said at a press conference after meeting about 3,000 ex-police and army pensioners from all over the country including Sabah and Sarawak at Universiti Tenaga Nasional (Uniten) here today.

The Prime Minister cited the example of Japan where pensioners were employed as toll collectors.

"In Japan, toll collectors are old people, here they are young girls," he said, explaining that such work did not require much expertise.

Dr Mahathir said if army and police pensioners, estimated at more than 300,000, are prepared to venture into different business sectors, the influx of foreign workers into the country can be curbed.

Earlier in his speech, Dr Mahathir said the government would consider increasing pension payment to police and army pensioners.

"We will consider it (increase) but it must be within our capability to pay," he said to a thunderous applause from the pensioners present.

Earlier, the President of the Malaysian Association of Army Pensioners Senator Datuk Muhamad Ghani called on the government to consider increasing pension payment to army pensioners.

The Prime Minister also urged the police and army pensioners not to depend on their pension alone for a living but to widen their income base by venturing into business or by seeking employment in other sectors.

"We are still strong and can work and be paid salaries for the work done, that is constructive as we can earn extra income," he said.

He referred to a Chinese proverb that says, "If someone comes up to you and ask for alms because he is hungry, give him a fishing rod."

Dr Mahathir said: "The Chinese are richer than us because they were given the fishing rod. If he is given food, it would just be for a day, but if he is given the fishing rod, he can catch fish every day and will not go hungry again," he said.

He pointed out that police and army pensioners should draw a lesson from the proverb and stand on their own feet to earn extra income.

Dr Mahathir hoped with the additional income, the Malays would be able to live in luxurious houses and up-market houses in new housing estates.

"Not only luxurious houses, even the ordinary houses are not owned by the Malays in these new housing estates. So we want to help them earn extra income so that they can live in these new housing schemes," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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