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Improving armed forces' service scheme

PEKAN, Sat. - The Defence Ministry has formed a committee to identify aspects of the armed forces' service scheme which can be improved.

Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said today once the committee had completed its study, the recommendations would be forwarded to the Government.

Najib said he would meet Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad once the proposal was ready.

He said the ministry had also proposed extra allowances for soldiers in addition to the ones proposed in the 2001 Budget.

Without going into the details, Najib, who is Pekan MP, said these were being looked into by the Public Service Department and the Finance Ministry.

Dr Mahathir said in Kedah yesterday that the Government cared about the welfare of soldiers and wanted them to enjoy better allowances and housing quarters.

"Generally, the Government is prepared to consider several things especially housing needs for soldiers. Projects that have been delayed will be speeded up, including the 6,000-unit project to be developed in Kuala Lumpur," Najib said.

Speaking after attending a Hari Raya gathering with wives of fishermen from his constituency at Kampung Pasir Panjang, he said the 2001 Budget had partly covered the allowances for members of the armed forces proposed by the ministry.

These include the rate of cash meal allowance that has been increased by between 62 per cent and 133 per cent.

The allowance for Royal Military College students has also been increased from RM35 to RM70 per month while the monthly allowance of apprenticeship of the Army Electrical and Mechanical Engineering School has also been increased by between 62 per cent and 100 per cent.

In addition, uniform and equipment allowance of RM200 is given to RMC students, Apprentice Trade School and army apprentices. Uniform allowance for volunteers of the armed forces has been increased by between four per cent and 50 per cent.

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