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Civil servants get one month to make a choice

Ramlan Said

PUTRAJAYA, Wed. - All government employees have one month from Oct 1 to opt for the Malaysian Remuneration System (SSM).

The 985,967 civil servants, including the armed forces and police, will start receiving their option letters from the Public Service Department before the end of the month.

PSD director-general Tan Sri Jamaluddin Ahmad Damanhuri said the civil servants would be given only one chance to make a choice. A retraction will not be allowed.

Employees who fail to make a choice or to return the option letters to their heads of department by Oct 31 will be deemed as having rejected the offer and will remain in their present scheme.

They will also be considered as having rejected the option if the letters are returned with amendments or objections.

Government employees are now serving under two schemes - the New Remuneration System (SSB) introduced a decade ago and the Cabinet Committee Salary System established in 1976.

(When the SSB was introduced, some 2,000 civil servants opted to remain under the Cabinet Committee Salary System.)

The SSM, which replaces the SSB from Nov 1, was announced by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on July 29.

Under the SSM, annual performance will no longer be in the hands of heads of department. Instead, examinations and courses, annual assessment reports and recommendations from heads of department will determine advancement.

Speaking after a briefing on the SSM for the Press at the PSD office today, Jamaluddin said the one-month deadline was sufficient, adding that initial response from civil servants had been encouraging.

"Briefing sessions are currently being conducted for staff of ministries and departments."

Compared to the SSB, he said the SSM was better as weaknesses under the old system had been corrected.

"It is the Government's stand that anyone opting for the new scheme should not get less than what they are enjoying now."

Jamaluddin was also asked on Cuepacs' dissatisfaction with the RM15 salary increment for the support group under SSM.

He stressed that contrary to the general perception, the new system was not a salary revision exercise, hence one should not only look at immediate gains like salary adjustments.

"The system encompasses all factors, including career advancement, enhancing knowledge and acquiring skills. The salary adjustment is inconsequential... the revision necessitated the move. I hope civil servants will look at SSM as a total package of improvement that they can aspire to enjoy in the future."

He said those unhappy with the RM15 increase should consider the 20 per cent salary adjustment for civil servants approved by the Government in 2000 and this year.

Cuepacs has called on the Government to offer a more reasonable amount for the support group. Under SSM, the management and professional group and higher management group will receive an additional salary of RM65 and RM110 monthly respectively.