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Government to study bonus request

LANGKAWI, Sat. - Cuepacs' request for a two-month bonus for the one million civil servants will be studied, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"We'll study all requests but study doesn't mean we agree. Sometimes, people are a bit strange, when we say we will study, they say we have agreed," he said at the sidelines of the Global 2002 - International Smart Partnership Dialogue.

He was asked to comment on a report yesterday quoting Cuepacs secretary-general Abdul Rahman Manan as saying that the request for the bonus was handed to Dr Mahathir, who is also Finance Minister, recently.

"They (Cuepacs) can ask, we can only give what we can afford," he said.

When pointed out that the civil servants expected a bonus this year because the economy was doing better than last year when they were paid a half-month or a minimum of RM1,000 bonus, Dr Mahathir said:

"How do we know? I haven't seen the figures of the country's growth for the second, third and fourth quarters."

Cuepacs is the umbrella body for public sector trade unions.

Meanwhile, Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Samsudin Osman also said the request will be given due consideration.

"We will leave this matter for the Government to consider as it depends largely on the nation's financial strength," he said.

Samsudin said he had yet to see the request.

In Budget 2002, Dr Mahathir had announced a half-month bonus or at least RM1,000 and 10 per cent increase in basic salary for civil servants beginning January this year.

This year's budget will be tabled in Parliament on Sept 20.