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New pay scheme from Nov 1

Ramlan Said; M.K. Megan

PUTRAJAYA, Mon. - A revised remuneration system for civil servants called the Sistem Saraan Malaysia will be introduced from Nov 1 with annual performance no longer in the hands of heads of department.

Under the system, examinations and courses, annual assessment reports and recommendations from heads of department will determine advancement.

The SSM will also provide a "windfall" for civil servants with those in the Support Group getting a salary topping-up of RM15 a month, RM65 for the Management and Professional Group and RM110 for the Higher Management Group.

"They will also be given a special one-off payment on Nov 1 when SSM takes effect. The Support Group will get RM220; Management and Professional RM350; and Higher Management Group RM650," Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said the revised system necessitated a salary adjustment.

The system, to cost the Government an additional RM302 million this year, is expected to end years of dissatisfaction among government employees who complained that assessment under the New Remuneration System (SSB) was open to abuse.

The Prime Minister said the SSM provided more transparent annual appraisals with emphasis on merit.

"It means heads of department will have no absolute rights on the matter anymore."

Dr Mahathir said the appraisal system would be monitored by a human resources development panel to be set up in each department.

"The main aspect considered in drawing up SSM is to address the dissatisfaction on appraisal by heads of department which expose employees to the former's whims and fancies.

"If he likes someone, sometimes the person will get promoted. But we have now eliminated this element with a new appraisal system based on examinations and compulsory courses."

The Prime Minister announced the details of the SSM after meeting representatives of Public Service Department and Cuepacs at his office. The three-tier system under SSB has been replaced by a two-tier system known as normal salary and enhanced salary progressions.

Five new promotional grades have been created to improve career chances for deserving civil servants.

The Government has also agreed to add another step to the maximum salary scale.

However, the SSB will not be abolished as civil servants will be given the option of remaining under it or opting for the SSM. Most civil servants are expected to opt for SSM.

Thanking Cuepacs for its co-operation in drawing up the revised system, the Prime Minister said although the discussions took some time, it was a better approach compared to confrontation.

Dr Mahathir said awards for excellence would no longer be tied to salary, as was the practice under SSB where recipients were rewarded with a one or half-month salary payments.

Under SSM, all recipients will receive RM1,000 and certificate.

The RM302 million in additional costs this year, said Dr Mahathir, would increase over the years. The introduction of SSM is expected to tax the

Government a further RM600.7 million next year, RM719.25 million in 2004, RM846.13 million in 2005 and RM976.86 million in 2006.

On whether the additional cost was a burden, he replied: "It is quite a heavy burden but affordable."

On whether SSM would see a better civil service, he said Cuepacs had given its assurance that government employees would improve their performance. If they failed, they would be the ones to lose out.

To a question that some civil servants might have been victimised under SSB, he said:

"They claim they have been victimised but we have not done any real study. This involves personal assessment and as usual, there will be some who are satisfied and some who are not."

To a suggestion that some might speculate that the general election was near because of the "goodies" to be received by civil servants under SSM, Dr Mahathir said:

"We believe civil servants will not forget the government's good deeds unlike some who teach people to be ungrateful, biting the hand that feeds. In the civil service, there is no one who is ungrateful."

When it was suggested that an election now would favour the Government, especially with the introduction of SSM, Dr Mahathir quipped:

"Everything is favourable ... we believe we can still win. What's the need to rush? Maybe in future, there will be better things that will put us in a much better position to win."

Pressed whether an election could be expected soon, he said: "Very soon, between now and 2004."

Speaking at the same Press conference, Cuepacs president Datuk N. Siva Subramaniam said SSM would help improve the quality of public service in the country.

He expressed confidence it would spur government employees to work harder and enhance productivity.

"If a civil servant fails to excel under this system, the blame lies with him.

"It will also be favourable to those wanting to join the civil service as they know that under the system, the sky is the limit when it comes to career enhancement."