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Mahathir-SSB

PROPOSED NEW ELEMENTS FOR NRS NEED SCRUTINY FIRST, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 31 (Bernama) -- The government needs to scrutinise first certain fresh elements proposed for incorporation into the existing New Remuneration Scheme (NRS) for civil servants before deciding to endorse them or not, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

The Prime Minister however did not rule out the possibility of the government adopting this year itself the new elements proposed by the Public Service Department (PSD) once all reservations raised are ironed out.

Dr Mahathir was speaking to reporters who approached him on his meeting at Putrajaya earlier today with the PSD on the review of the NRS.

"I have had a comprehensive briefing but I feel there are certain matters that need scrutinising. Hence there is no decision made yet," he said when approached after opening the Pasarakyat complex here which enables farmers to sell their produce direct to consumers.

Dr Mahathir said the revised version of the NRS, if implemented, would incur financial implications totalling RM1 billion for the government and he expressed apprehension that the cost could very well exceed that quantum.

The PSD conducted a review of the NRS in 1992 and the review report had emphasised several new approaches.

The NRS, since its implementation in 1992, has constantly been a cause of gross dissatisfaction among government workers currently over 800,000-strong.

On a question about his reported meeting this week with rival factions in the MCA, Dr Mahathir said both sides explained from their perspectives the protracted in-fighting between them.

As chairman of the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition, Dr Mahathir said it was his responsibility to know the actual situation plaguing the BN component party.

Asked whether there were suggestions that he mediate a settlement to the MCA problem, Dr Mahathir said: "Some are of the opinion that as BN chairman I should seriously attend to the matter and indeed I am considering it."

On the probability of the MCA also having two presidents as seen in the aftermath of a power struggle besetting the Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah, Dr Mahathir said such likelihood was purely a speculation by the media.

"You are all gleefully looking forward to such a situation the PBRS is in, this is the ideal situation for the press," he said sarcastically.

On water rate negotiations with Singapore, he said Malaysia understandably would demand reasonable payment from the republic.

Dr Mahathir said any decision on the matter should take national interest into consideration.

"While we wish to remain on good terms with Singapore, it should not be at our expense. That's why we need to have negotiations soonest possible," he said.

The prime minister said that since Malaysians themselves had raised the issue of water being sold cheaply to Singapore, this required the government to explain the actual situation.

Commenting on a foreign news report that jailed former finance minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim was tipped to be nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, Dr Mahathir said: "Very good. Nobel Peace Prize is not a peace

prize, it is a political prize.

"They give awards, Nobel prizes so as to ensure that these people can do what they like and be protected by the general public. The idea is to ensure that there is a struggle and (to) destabilise a country, and people will have fun reporting."

Earlier, in his speech Dr Mahathir proposed that the private sector erect more hyper-markets that provide farmers with facilities to offer their produce to consumers without having to go through middle-men.

He said that hyper-markets could charge prices for farm produce slightly higher than farmers' or night markets to help farmers secure better life through boosted income.

"If such a concept could be expanded, we shall see farmers having a better life, consumers getting goods at reasonable prices and hyper-market operators earning some gains," Dr Mahathir said.

While urging farmers to merge their plots to allow for large-scale agricultural activities that could bring higher returns, Dr Mahathir also took to task unscrupulous middlemen for excessive profiteering.

The Pasarakyat, located on a two-ha-site off Jalan Imbi here, aims at providing an alternative marketing channel for farmers, breeders, fishermen and food processors.

Pasar Rakyat Sdn Bhd managing director Steve Wong said the idea to set up the market came about after he faced problems with middlemen to sell his sweet corn planted on a piece of land in Perak.

-- BERNAMA  
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