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Najib-Service

NATIONAL SERVICE DETAILS WILL BE ANNOUNCED IN MAY, SAYS NAJIB

KUALA LUMPUR, March 13 (Bernama) -- The government will announce the methods of operating the National Service programme in May, said Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak today.

"Proposals on operations of the National Service are still being considered. We will hand over the final report to the Prime Minister (Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad) and a decision is expected in May," he said.

He said this after chairing the Cabinet Committee meeting on the National Service, due to be implemented next year, at the Defence Ministry here.

Najib said it would be difficult to announce details of the programme before the government makes a decision.

"We will wait for the final decision, but I wish to stress here that the programme will be implemented next year. The Bill on National Service will be tabled in the Dewan Rakyat in June," he said.

Najib said a draft, on the method of operations for the programme, was completed and that it would be tabled to the Cabinet this month.

When asked about today's meeting, he said the Cabinet Committee discussed the principles of National Service, target group, training facilities and legal matters.

"This is not a conscription programme, as observed in other countries such as Singapore, but it's a programme to enhance national development and military training plays only a small part," he said.

On another matter, Najib said the government had revised the allowance for medical, dental, veterinary and engineering staff in the Armed Forces.

He said the allowance which was introduced in 1961 would be raised for the very first time, from RM120 to RM300 a month, and backdated to Jan 1, 2003.

"Providing allowance is an incentive to encourage professional officers to work for the Malaysian Armed Forces as well as a form of recognition by the government towards contributions made by these officers to the nation," Najib said.

He said 363 officers will benefit from the allowance increase and would cost the government an annual expenditure of RM830,000.

Najib said he hoped the move would attract more medical officers to serve with the Malaysian Armed Forces.

-- BERNAMA

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