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Civil servants to get half-month bonus in staggered payments

#### BONUS AND TAX RELIEF

THE half-month bonus for civil servants announced in the Budget, amounting to RM400 million, will be paid in stages beginning next month, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

The Government had earlier paid a half-month bonus to the one million civil servants.

The announcement made during the Budget yesterday was the second half-month bonus to be enjoyed by the civil servants.

"It costs the Government about RM400 million and we will start paying in staggered payments beginning next month," Dr Mahathir said at a Press Conference after tabling the Budget.

On the proposed listing of the Federal Land Development Authority (Felda), Dr Mahathir said Felda, being the largest plantation owner in the world, could fare better internationally by going public.

He said the listing would also enable Felda "investors" such as the Federal Government, State Governments, co-operatives and settlers to benefit directly and indirectly.

Dr Mahathir said the Government would continue to be the controlling stake-holder in Felda and the estates, which would be commercialised under the proposed listing.

"There are two parts (of estates in Felda), one that have been sold to the settlers and there are estates which have no settlers and are developed and belong entirely to Felda. So it is the estates owned by Felda which will be commercialised," he said, adding that the principal aim of the listing was to turn Felda into an international brand name and to enhance the equity ownership of Bumiputeras in the corporate sector.

While tabling the Budget, Dr Mahathir expressed hope that the Bumiputera settlers who were allowed to own Felda shares would not divest of their shares. Asked to elaborate on this during the Press conference, he said that the Government was studying how to effectively discourage the settlers from easily selling their stake.

"We are thinking about it, we don't know how because once we sell shares to people it becomes their property and I don't know whether we have a right to impose conditions or not...we will look into that," he said.

On the abolishment of road-tax for motorcycles with engine capacity not exceeding 150cc, Dr Mahathir said that the Government stood to lose more than RM70 million from the exemption, but it was made with the interest of youths, especially students at institutions of higher learning who had limited income.

At present, the road tax for motorcycles with engine capacity of 75cc and less is RM50 in Peninsular Malaysia and RM12 in Sarawak, (75-100cc) RM55 and RM12, (101-150cc) RM65 and RM12, (151-200cc) RM100 and RM24, (201-250cc) RM150 and RM24, and (251-500cc) RM200 and RM36-60.