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## Arbitration body for civil servants likely

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PUTRAJAYA, Thurs. - The Government is studying a proposal to set up a neutral arbitration body for civil servants to refer employment-related grievances.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Rais Yatim said the mechanism proposed by Cuepacs would provide a neutral avenue for civil servants to seek redress over their dismissal, disciplinary action or work-related problems.

The body, he added, would also make the country's public service more accountable, transparent and fair to civil servants, Rais added.

"Under the proposal, if a civil servant feels unfair disciplinary action has been taken against him, he can make use of the facility that costs almost nothing," said Rais after a closed-door meeting with Cuepacs president S. Subramaniam and secretary-general Abdul Rahman Manan in the Prime Minister's Department here.

The body, he said, was necessary in the long-run as it involved the welfare of civil servants.

"The Government is keen to make this proposal a reality."

Civil servants at present did not have such a body to which they could refer their problems.

If government servants are dissatisfied with the action of their superior, they can only appeal to their respective department's disciplinary board which is chaired by the head of each department.

If they are still unhappy, they can appeal to the Public Services Commission Appeals Board which is chaired by the commission's chairman.

Their final avenue is to bring the case to a civil court.

Asked on the membership of the body, Rais said it was too early to say as various ministries would have to study the proposal first.

On whether there were any models elsewhere which the body would use, Rais said the country had its own legislative system but would listen to inputs from all parties.

Rais said the matter would be discussed during the Cabinet meeting and would be followed up with discussions with the Public Service Department, Ministry of Human Resources, Cuepacs and other relevant bodies.

Meanwhile, Siva Subramaniam said the arbitration mechanism would give civil servants an avenue to present their case to a neutral party.

He added the proposal was among the topics Cuepacs would discuss with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad during a meeting next month.

It is also understood that the proposal was endorsed by the National Joint Council, of which Cuepacs and the Public Service Department are members, during its meeting in Langkawi in April last year.

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