

THE STAR

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# Pak Lah: We will still deliver

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## Five-year unpaid leave option will not affect government services

**PUTRAJAYA:** The option allowing women civil servants to take up to five years in unpaid maternity leave will not affect the public delivery system.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said heads of departments would have to properly manage the workload and staff to ensure that productivity did not suffer.

"The heads of department must be clever in managing their staff and

resources. If there are suddenly too many employees wishing to apply for unpaid leave at the same time, it may affect operations.

"We will depend on these heads of departments to ensure there will be no impact on the public delivery system," he said when asked if the Government's recent decision could affect its public delivery system, which it was trying to enhance.

If necessary, he said, the Government would ensure that vacancies in

the service were filled quickly, he added.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak announced on Monday that women civil servants would be allowed five years in unpaid maternity leave to look after their children, and would only lose out on two increments instead of five.

Abdullah was talking to reporters after launching the Implementation Coordination Unit (ICU) *e-merah* system and *I Cerve U* portal at the Putra-

jaya International Convention Centre here yesterday.

The *e-merah* system was designed to improve district officers' collection and compilation of data of their areas.

Abdullah said he did not foresee a sudden increase in the number of women staff applying for this option at the same time.

"I don't think there will be 200 or 300 women staff who are going to apply up to five years," he said.

However, he said there might also

be women staff who could take advantage of the option to follow their husbands overseas, particularly those married to diplomats.

The best part about this option, added Abdullah, was that it allowed the women civil servants to enjoy notional increments during the time they were on leave so that when they returned to their posts, they did not have to forfeit their seniority and would resume work at a higher salary.