

Backing from the top for VSS proposal

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KOTA BARU: The proposed Voluntary Separation Scheme (VSS) for the civil service has the support of the prime minister and deputy prime minister as a way of ridding the government workforce of non-performers.

In giving his nod to the proposal by Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Mohd Sidek Hassan, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said it could even serve as a stern reminder for employees to buck up.

He said he would be meeting with Sidek soon to obtain the details of the proposal.

"I think it is a good idea," he said after launching the development plan for Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK) at its city campus in Pengkalan Chepa.

The prime minister said the civil service had its own internal disciplinary measures to deal with delinquent civil servants.

"We have taken action against those deemed unable to contribute or who caused too many problems.

"There are those whom we terminate or offer early retirement but we don't publicise these cases in the media," he said.

UMK has 298 students enrolled in four courses, including agriculture, business and heritage studies.

The government has allocated RM135 million to build two other campuses in Bachok and Jeli. They are due for completion in 2010.

Datuk Seri Najib Razak described the VSS as "a good solution for those who are not committed to or lacked interest in the civil service".

"This will also cover civil servants who want to set up their own businesses," he said after opening the Teluk Intan Umno division meeting yesterday.

The government has agreed in principle to Sidek's proposal and would study the formal submission from the Public Service Department.

"It is Sidek's wish to see that only those who are really committed and dedicated to their profession remain in government."

Najib said the costs involved would be a key factor in whether to go along with the VSS.

The PSD was willing to take up the chief secretary's proposal, its head of corporate communications, Hasniah Rashid, said.

The department is in charge of in-service policies affecting government staff, while the Public Services Commission (PSC) is responsible for recruitment.

On Thursday, Sidek called for a "clear exit policy" for underperforming staff, saying the VSS practised by the private sector was a model the government should study.

Hasniah said the civil service had regulations for the removal of staff with medical problems and whose services were no longer required due to structural changes within the administration.

"They will be allowed to go and will receive their pension if they qualify," she said.

The policy on civil servants with disciplinary problems include sacking without payment or compensation.