

# Lowest-paid civil staff now off the poverty line

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**PUTRAJAYA:** Civil servants, the police and the armed forces will receive a salary increase of between 7.5 per cent and 42 per cent from July 1.

The news, announced by the prime minister at a Labour Day gathering for civil servants yesterday, brings cheer to 1,002,040 members of the public sector, who have been pushing for a pay rise since early this year.

A total of 557,033 pensioners will also enjoy the new increments according to their last drawn salaries.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi also announced a 100 per cent increase in the cost of living allowance (Cola), which will be RM300, RM200 and RM100 depending on location.

With the increments, the government will up its spending on salaries by RM3.4 billion for the rest of this year, and an extra RM6.8 billion annually from next year. It will also spend an extra RM600 million on increased Cola pay-outs this year, and RM1.2 billion annually.

Abdullah reminded civil servants that their competency and motivation must increase in line

with the salary hike.

"With this increment, the rakyat and government now have higher expectations of you."

The highest increment for civil servants is 35 per cent for members of the Support Group 2. There are 319,336 staff in this group and they are the lowest paid in the public sector as their minimum qualification is the Penilaian Menengah Rendah (PMR) or Sijil Rendah Pelajaran (SRP).

With the increase, the lowest basic salary (received by Grade N1 cooks) will be RM649.15 a month compared with RM480.85 before the increment. With fixed allowances, the lowest total monthly income will be RM1,024.15 compared with RM805.85 currently.

This lifts the lowest-paid civil servants off the poverty line, an issue which Cuepacs had raised several times. The poverty line is RM691 in the peninsula, RM888 in Sabah and RM765 in Sarawak.

Civil servants in the Support Group 1 get an increase of 25 per cent of the basic monthly pay. Holding a minimum qualification of either the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) or a diploma, they

form the largest group of civil servants at 434,899 staff.

Higher ranking officers from the management and professional, and premier grade groups get an increase of 15 per cent and 7.5 per cent respectively. There are 246,202 officers in the management and professional group, and 1,603 in the premier grade group.

The increments are for all federal-level civil servants and will be detailed in a circular to be issued on June 16. The Public Service Department has left it up to state governments to decide on a similar increase for state officials and local authorities.

Meanwhile, police and officers in the armed forces of similar rank will enjoy a higher percentage increase compared with civil servants.

The lowest-paid ranks, such as constable and corporal, get a basic salary increase of 42 per cent while sergeants, sergeant-majors, sub-inspectors, inspectors and chief inspectors get an increase of 30 per cent.

Senior police personnel in the management and professional group get an 18 per cent increase. This affects chief police officers,

who usually hold the ranks of either assistant superintendent, deputy superintendent or superintendent. Assistant commissioners of police, senior assistant commissioners II and I also fall under this category.

Premier grade policemen such as deputy commissioner, commissioner and deputy inspector-general get a nine per cent increase.

In announcing the salary hike, Abdullah said the government had taken into account factors such as economic performance, the need to reward and motivate civil servants while recruiting competent professionals to the public sector, the higher cost of living, and the government's financial capability.

"Civil servants need to be motivated to increase their productivity. The government also acknowledges the higher cost of living and is always sensitive to the impact of rising prices, especially on the lower income groups.

"As for our financial capability, income tax collection has increased... the government has also managed to reduce its budget deficit from 5.6 per cent in 2003 to 3.5 per cent last year."