

# 'Yes' to pay rise

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## CIVIL SERVANTS **DESERVE IT**, SAYS ABDULLAH

**PUTRAJAYA:** The prime minister yesterday announced that the 1.2 million civil servants will get a pay rise, with the disparity in the salaries of high and low-ranking employees considered in the formula.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi accepted the argument that the high cost of living had caused hardship to those in the lower income group, adding that the civil servants deserved the pay increase.

He, however, stopped short of giving the quantum of increase, saying that only Public Services Department (PSD) director-general Tan Sri Ismail Adam knew what it was, reported Bernama.

Abdullah made the announcement at the monthly assembly of staff in the Prime Minister's Department.

This is the first time the government had given a definite "Yes"

to the question of a salary increase for civil servants as previously the response had been that the matter was being studied.

Abdullah jokingly said he chose to talk only about the much-anticipated salary increase knowing full well that civil servants were "not interested" to hear about other things.

"Some people say it has been quite a while since the last pay rise. Others question how can there be one as the delivery system hasn't been enhanced. And there are those who say that there's a need for a pay hike considering the current high cost of living," he said.

Cuepacs had proposed that the government review the salaries of civil servants with an increase of between 10% and 40% according to grade. The last revision was in 1992.

Cuepacs had suggested a salary

increase of 40% for Support Group II (Grades 1 to 16), which makes up the lowest category of public employees, and an increase of 30% for Support Group I (Grades 17 to 40).

For the Management and Professional Group (Grades 41 to 54), Cuepacs had proposed an increase of 20% and for the Premier Grade of the Public Sector (Jusa) a rise of 10%.

Ismail said after the assembly that the PSD was in the final stages of studying the proposed rise. Asked whether the formula would favour those in the lower income bracket, he said: "It'll be like what the prime

minister just said, like what's being demanded by Cuepacs?"

Later, at the World Halal Forum which he opened, Abdullah was asked whether the new salary structure would be known before the tabling of the 2008 Budget. He refused to give a date. Asked how much it would cost the government, he said this would be known only after everything was finalised.

Cuepacs president Omar Osman welcomed the announcement and hoped the government would look into the quantum, especially for the lower income group.