

Why civil servants deserve pay rise

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PETALING JAYA: Cuepacs' call for a salary increase for civil servants is "well-merited", former director of Asli's Centre for Public Policy Studies (CPPS) Dr Lim Teck Ghee said.

In fact, he said, the government needs to urgently conduct a salary review for the civil service because "the salary differential within the

Malaysian civil service is among the worst in the world".

In a statement yesterday, Lim, who is also a former World Bank senior social scientist and United Nations regional advisor on poverty and social development, said Cuepacs' submission for a pay increase was merited because of the rising costs that have led to declining living standards for public servants.

"In particular, the lowest-scale

group is receiving salaries of less than RM500 a month, which places them in the group of relative and hardcore poor," he said.

* Additionally, he said the quantum of increase for the higher-salaried groups should be stringently scrutinised on the basis of national affordability and socio-economic justice.

"A progressive salary increase with the lower scales receiving higher percentages and the higher

scales, in particular Superscales, receiving considerably less is necessary to ensure fairness and equity," he said.

"It should also be noted that a high increase for the top scales is likely to increase the income inequality in Malaysia which is already among the worst in the Asian region," Lim said, noting that higher scale civil servants already received substantial bonuses, allowances and numerous non-cash perks and privileges.

Cuepacs, the umbrella union for the country's one million civil servants, said earlier this week they wanted a salary increase of between 10% and 40%, because of the rising cost of living and their improved work performance.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak has said the government would seriously look into the request.

The last salary revision for civil servants was 14 years ago.

As CPPS director, Lim was responsible for putting together a report that was submitted to the government. It was called Proposals for the Ninth Malaysia Plan. One chapter was on the reforms that were needed to create a more racially representative and world class civil service.

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- Lim Teck Ghee

He said Cuepacs and other stakeholders should also push for urgent reforms that have been ignored by the government in the past two decades.

"This includes issues of structural change to ensure higher efficiency and productivity; merit-based service conditions pegged to market performance; and encouraging recruitment of non-

Malays to ensure a more representative civil service," he said.

He proposed that a Royal Commission be set up to deal with these reforms comprehensively.