

**Pakatan wants Parliament to review civil service pay tweaks**  
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**By Clara Chooi**

KUALA LUMPUR, March 26 — Pakatan Rakyat (PR) proposed today the formation of a permanent parliamentary committee (PPC) to review the government's latest tweaks to the civil service salary scheme.

PKR vice-president Nurul Izzah Anwar told a press conference in Parliament today that the panel should be tasked with ensuring all rightful stakeholders, including the Congress of Unions of Employees in the Public and Civil Services (CUEPACS) and the federal opposition, are consulted before any sweeping changes are made to the scheme.

"PR not only supports the call by CUEPACS to be consulted as a rightful stakeholder, but also not to repeat the government's penchant for unilateral action which caused the earlier SBPA scheme to be unceremoniously scrapped due to strong opposition," she said.

On March 8, Datuk Seri Najib Razak announced the scrapping of his administration's controversial Public Service Remuneration Scheme (SBPA), which had been criticised for only benefiting top government servants while leaving the majority of the civil service with paltry salary hikes.

The prime minister said the existing Malaysian Remuneration System (SSM) will now be maintained with improvements in place of the new SBPA that was introduced on January 1.

But CUEPACS complained later that it had not been consulted before the decision was made.

"PR is also aware of the government's effort to maintain and improve the existing SSM, which includes the formation of a special committee tasked to review in a 'comprehensive and holistic' manner all aspects on how to improve the civil service.

"Therefore, we propose that a PPA be established," Nurul Izzah said.

In Parliament on March 13, Najib insisted his administration had never wavered from raising public sector wages across the board despite being forced to scrap the SBPA.

"In my budget speech last October, I gave the government's commitment based on the principle of a seven to 13 per cent salary hike and a raise in annual income of between RM80 and RM320.

"But when it was translated into action, it ran off from the decision that was made. That is why we took the decision to cancel SBPA and return to the commitment that I have made," he said in response to Opposition Leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Under the newly-tweaked SSM, salaries of the Chief Secretary to the Government and top-tier civil servants in the "Premier Service I" (Turus I) category would only be raised by seven per cent.

Civil servants in the management and professional groups along with those in Grades 1 to 54, in turn, would see their salaries hiked by 13 per cent across the board.

It was previously revealed that under the SBPA, the Chief Secretary would draw a salary of RM60,000 while those in the "Premier Service" category were set to rake in RM36,000, a vast difference from those in the lower pay grades, some of whom were only given increments as low as RM1.70.

The disparity between the salaries of top civil servants and those in the lower grades had ignited anger and disapproval in the 1.4 million-strong civil service — a key vote bank for the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition — ahead of a general election that must be called by May 2013.

Najib also defended the initial introduction of the SBPA, saying at least 13 meetings were held with CUEPACS across 2011.

The BN chief said this led to a memorandum of understanding on the introduction of the new scheme being signed by the civil service union and the government on December 28 last year.

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