

5.5 pc PAY RISE FOR GOVT MEN

THE pay increase for the 163,000 civil servants next month will be an average of five percent, the Government announced yesterday.

The low increment immediately raised dissatisfaction among the junior civil servants unions.

Several unions said they would step up their pressure for

more pay while the Junior Police Officers Association urged the Government to postpone the pay rise until the economy has recovered.

Under the new adjustment, trainees at the bottom of the salary scale will get the highest 6.8 percent increase.

In real terms, this represents \$70 a month.

Those at the top of the master pay scale will get a rise of 4.47 percent while officers on the directorate pay scale will receive increases ranging from 2.35 to 4.05 percent.

The pay increase will cost taxpayers an extra \$690 million, including \$224 million for more than 50,000 employees in government-subsidized organisations.

A senior government official said yesterday the increases took into consideration the economic situation and the fringe benefits enjoyed by civil servants.

The pay trend in the private sector showed an increase between 7.24 and 8.8 percent, and the consumer price index increased by 10 to 11 percent in the same period.

"But the private sector increases are based on merit while civil servants move up according to a scale," the official said.

"In view of the \$3.2 billion estimated deficit, the five percent is not bad," he said.

He said if the adjustment was

too low, the Government was afraid that many people would quit.

He said the Government would not change its decision even under pressure by civil servant unions.

Last year, civil servants got a 15 percent pay jump which cost taxpayers \$1,525 million.

The chairman of the Chinese Civil Servants Association, Kwok Yuen-hon, said the pay adjustments were unfair.

The association, which has about 15,000 members, will hold a meeting this weekend to discuss the issue.

Non-Expatriate Officers Association spokesman Albert Lam also expressed disappointment.

"We feel rather disappointed at the pay adjustment. However, it should be understandable under the present economic situation," he said.

The chairman of the Junior Police Officers Association, Charles Ng, said the Government should postpone the pay jump until the economy had recovered.

"The \$150 raise means nothing in view of the recent spate of price increases. It would jet up inflation.

"It would make lives of the junior civil servants even more difficult. I consider it a waste of public money," he added.