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Civil servants agree on proposal

15pc pay rise 'likely' for 140,000

Hongkong's 140,000 civil servants are likely to get a pay rise of about 15 per cent from next month.

The staff side of the Senior Civil Service Council is known to have agreed to a 15 per cent pay rise proposal by the Government.

Sources said last night the agreement was reached at a meeting on Friday.

The pay rise proposals will be submitted for Finance Committee approval within the next few weeks.

The new scales will come into effect from next month if the green light is given by the committee, which scrutinises public spending.

Both officials and the staff sides have been tight-lipped on the proposals following a warning last week by the Secretary for the Civil Service, Mr Martin Rowlands, over the leakage of pay rise proposals.

Sources said agreement had already been reached and there was no need for a further meeting.

Official sources confirmed that the increase would be about 15 per cent on average

across the board.

Those at the lower end of the pay scale will get a little more than their seniors. But the difference is said to be marginal.

The Government has decided to put forward the annual adjustment for civil servants this year following recommendations by the Standing Commission on Civil Service Pay and Conditions of Work.

The commission has been engaged in an overall review of civil service pay policy for more than a year.

It was originally due to be completed in summer last year.

However, because of the complexity of the subject, the commission found it could not complete the study in time to affect the pay rises this year.

The commission has therefore proposed, as an interim measure, to the Government to base the pay rise this year on the results of a pay trend survey into the private sector as in previous years.

But they have recommended to the Government to give the rise from next month to eliminate the need for back pay. This has been accepted by the Government.

The first pay talks were conducted in the middle of last month when the staff side was briefed on the findings of the pay trend survey.

But they did not receive the pay rise proposals until this month.

Last year, civil servants received a pay rise of about 17.5 per cent on average.

The methodology of deciding civil servants' pay increases has been a subject of contention for quite some time. Some unions want to participate in the machinery which fixes the pay while others have proposed that the Pay Investigation Unit should either be independent or come under the wing of the standing commission.

The standing commission is expected to publish its findings in the middle of this year.