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3,000 inspectors stop work over salary dispute

By WANDA SZETO

ABOUT 3,000 government technical inspectors and works supervisors will not work today due to a pay dispute.

But the Government said the civil servants' stoppage, the largest in recent years, would not endanger the public or affect the operation of the eight works departments involved.

Sammy Miu Kwok-ying, spokesman for the Joint Working Group for Salary Structure Review on Technical Inspectorate and Related Grade Officers, said that half of his 6,000 members would stay at home today.

He said housing inspectors would not show up on construction sites, electrical service inspectors would refuse to enforce the new laws on adaptors, and highways inspectors would not supervise road works.

"The contractors will be left to keep their standards. We will not go to supervise their work," he said.

Mr Miu, a Water Supplies Department inspector, said the officers had collected 3,000 applications for

paid casual leave, which have been submitted for approval.

"We will stay at home with our kids on Children's Day, and let them know that their fathers who have contributed all their lives to the prosperity of Hong Kong are being treated in a humiliating manner," said Mr Miu, who has been in the civil service for 18 years.

He claimed the Government, and the Standing Commission on Civil Service Salaries and Conditions of Service, had not reviewed their pay scale in 1989.

As a result, they had been receiving \$2,000 to \$8,000 less than other inspectors with the same qualifications every month.

The group is asking the Government to raise the pay scale from between \$13,500 and \$48,000, to between \$14,900 and \$54,985. They want a new position of Senior Superintendent in each department with a \$65,645 monthly salary.

The Government said it had arranged for the non-strikers to take on the extra work.

Hu Man-shiu, Director

of Water Supplies, confirmed that 600 out of 1,400 inspectors and supervisors in the department had applied for leave.

"But we have approved only 20 per cent. Most of our job is working around the clock, we will not let this to disturb our operation," said Mr Hu.

Deputy Secretary for Civil Service Michael Stone said the review, though delayed, had been completed.

He rejected the pay rise request which may cost the taxpayers \$110 million every year, but said he had agreed to create a new position with top salary at \$54,985.

The Government said lower rank officers would deal with any emergencies.

Legislator Tam Yiu-chung, who supports the strikers, said the action was the only way staff could express their discontent.

The strikers are from departments of Water Supplies, Highways, Civil Engineering, Electrical and Mechanical Services, Architectural Services, Housing, Territory Development, and Drainage Services.