

Civil service pay reform to continue

The government is going ahead with a nationwide reform of civil servants' pay that includes raising the salaries of officials in poorer regions, despite the ongoing financial crisis, a publicity official from the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security said on Monday.

"At present, we do not have any plans to amend or postpone the scheduled reform," the official, who did not want to be named, told China Daily.

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The salary reform is aimed at regulating the allowances and subsidies of the country's 8 million civil servants, by reducing such payments in affluent areas and boosting them in poorer regions. The changes rolled out in July 2006 and are expected to be completed next year.

Civil servants in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region and in Henan, Hebei and Anhui provinces already saw their allowances raised from last month, the Sichuan-based West China Metropolis Daily reported on Monday.

Henan provincial authorities received the green light from the State Council to raise the monthly salaries of their officials by 300 yuan (\$44) each in mid-November, the newspaper reported.

The move was part of the national reform to regulate civil servants' pay and had nothing to do with the current financial crisis affecting economies worldwide, a Henan official said.

"We made the adjustment because our civil servants have complained about their low income for a long time," said the official, who wanted to be known by his surname Wu, with the finance department of the Henan provincial government.

"The changes have nothing to do with the financial crisis. We submitted the requisite applications last year," Wu said.

Still, other researchers said it was not the right time to continue with the salary reform.

"The timing is not good, as the global economy is in a recession and China is facing mounting economic pressure," Su Hainan, head of the Institute for Labor and Wage Studies, was quoted by The Economic Observer as saying on Sunday.

The government should step up efforts to fight corruption and lessen tax for companies instead of increasing civil servants' pay, Cao Jianhai, a researcher from the Institute of Industrial Economics at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said on Monday.

"Increasing investment on rural education as well as rural infrastructure and agriculture are also among the government's imminent tasks," Cao said.

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