Lured by perks, over 40% joined private sector in past year

MORE lawyers and accountants in the civil service are jumping ship to the private sector thanks to the allure of many perks, such as better pay.

According to figures released to Today by the Public Service Division (PSD) yesterday, nearly one in two, or 46 per cent, of all legal service officers and accountants have tendered their resignations over the past year for greener pastures. Some lawyers have eventually gone on to earn over 30 per cent more than what they did in the civil service.

The Government is also struggling to hold onto its accountants. Forty-two per cent tendered their resignations over the past 12 months, citing reasons such as better pay and prospects in the private sector.

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— Statement from the Public Service Division

While the civil service does not aim to lead private sector salaries, we need to keep pace. The challenge to attract and retain talent was one key issue raised during the Committee of Supply debates in Parliament earlier this month. Then, Minister-in-charge of the civil service Teo Chee Hean announced that some civil servants would likely get a salary adjustment later this year — the first review since 2000.

This time around, there will not be a uniform, large-scale revision — instead, those services which are lagging significantly behind the market rate are likely to receive higher adjustments.

Said the PSD in its statement: “While the Civil Service does not aim to lead private sector salaries, we need to keep pace. Otherwise we will lose our ability to recruit and keep good officers.”

Yesterday morning, Mr Teo, who is also the Defence Minister, said the Government is studying the employment data of fresh graduates as it reviews the salaries of civil servants.

He said the civil service would adjust its pay after looking at graduate employment surveys — such as the one released by the Singapore Management University on Monday, which showed its graduates pulling in 13 per cent more in starting salaries last year, compared to 2005.

Speaking at Republic Polytechnic’s second graduation ceremony, Mr Teo said: “We’ve seen the job market become much more competitive, so we’re looking at the data from various sources, and looking at how that impacts upon the Civil Service. We will put together the appropriate packages and it will be ready by April.”