

Civil service in for overhaul

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tuesday.
PRIME MINISTER Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad wants obsolete procedures in the civil service abolished and the staff sensitive and responsive to the feelings and plight of the people with a view to helping them overcome problems.

“He said yesterday they should realise that qualifications, knowledge and expertise did not guarantee they would be good government servants.

“In the final analysis, the quality that distinguishes the good from the bad public servant is the feeling of empathy and awareness of the weight that responsibilities carry,” he said when opening the main campus of the National Institute for Public Administration (Intan) at Bukit Kiara here.

National development was a complex process and it would not be effective without enlightenment of the importance of the process.

He said responsibilities of Government employees, however small, had impact on the public and if Government employees did not discharge their responsibilities with efficiency and dedication, problems would result, some of which could be serious in their effects.

“It should be remembered here that Government officers themselves would be ‘outsiders’ during the times when they have to seek Government service. The point is that excellent service will benefit all,” he said.

The Prime Minister said problems appeared big to the person facing them although they might seem minor to others, including Government staff. The problem became all the more complex when the person

facing it was poor, underprivileged and lacking in resources and know-how.

“We can conclude that what is called public service’ is the willingness and capacity to understand the difficulties and feelings of the people with the intention of helping them overcome the problems faced,” he said.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir called for eradication of out-

moded procedures that contributed to delay in Government service; stressing this not only incurred unnecessary expenditure but also hampered development.

He said time was a priceless commodity and Government staff should never condone delay in their work as the country would be the ultimate loser.

“Islam considers not just abuse of power but also wastage of time and deliberate delaying of action as a sin,” he said.

“This means we have sinned if we maintain procedures that contribute to delay.”

Government service was a cost-intensive sector, yet service was slow, approval time-consuming and collection of taxes and revenue slack or abandoned altogether, with time and energy instead devoted to resolving trivial problems.

He believed if these weaknesses could be overcome, even if only by 25 per

cent, national productivity would increase; national debt reduced and the process of development expedited.

He said the Government had in recent years introduced new approaches and policies including the punch-clock and desk file systems to upgrade development and standard of the public service.

These innovations and new orientation were aimed at ensuring the well-being of the nation and the quality of Government service.

He wanted to know whether Government officers and staff who had undergone training truly understood the new orientation and the philosophy behind it. He also wanted to know how far they had applied this perception in their daily tasks.

“Has the concept of a clean administration become a daily practice and have officers and staff who had training returned to implement the desk file con-

cept? Have obsolete procedures been abolished or are they still existing and plaguing the service?” he asked.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir stressed that the public sector was the engine of national development, and as a machine, it must operate smoothly and effectively and achieve its objectives efficiently and within the shortest possible time.

He hoped Intan would continue to improve its performance, not in quantitative terms of number of courses and participants, but in qualitative terms—through improving the standard or quality of work method, attitude and conduct of those sent to it for training.

He felt Intan should strike a balance between the aspect of knowledge and the aspects of philosophy and attitude as well as skill in its training programmes.

The training would be futile if the knowledge and expertise imparted were not accepted and practised.