

Reduce red tape, Dr M tells agencies

By Syed Nadzri

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad wants government departments dealing directly with the public to reduce red tape by simplifying their procedures and to look towards automation in their operations.

Forms issued by the departments, he said, should be changed where necessary to facilitate efficiency and to streamline administration.

Speaking at the Administrative and Diplomatic Officers Association dinner at the Kuala Lumpur Hilton tonight, he said these departments should live up to the public's expectations by providing prompt, efficient and cheap services.

Also present was Public Service director-general Tan Sri Mahmud Taib who retires tomorrow.

Dr Mahathir described the public service as the pulse of the government machinery and called for further efforts to make Malaysia's the best in the world.

He said the country's public service, according to the *World Competitive Report*, was already placed fourth in terms of efficiency.

"Compared to the public service in other developing countries, I believe ours is far more professional and systematic," he said, adding that it could become the world's best if officers strived to be more dedicated, disciplined, efficient and productive.

The Prime Minister disagreed with the opinion of some quarters which now regarded the public service sector as having outlived its usefulness.

"The sector is important, and will continue to play an important role — only its functions need to change with the times. The public service should be a facilitator which can fulfil the needs of the people, especially the private sector."

Touching on the need to reduce bureaucracy, Dr Mahathir expressed the hope that the services provided to the people would be "easy, fast and not burdensome".

"Forms used by government departments should be reviewed and, if necessary, changed to streamline operations.

"As far as possible, the public service sector should turn to automation because this would speed up operations and reduce paperwork. An important requirement is to produce something cheaply but speedily."

Acknowledging the importance of the administrative and diplomatic service, Dr Mahathir gave a firm reminder about the need to have the right people to handle the responsibilities.

To ensure this, he called for a strict selection process "so that only the right candidates are chosen to be in the service".

Dr Mahathir also noted that some government departments were trying to improve by adopting

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changes like introducing the clients' charter among other concepts.

"Although the introduction of such programmes is important, their success depends on how far and effective the follow-ups or follow-throughs are."

In view of the technological advancements in the world today, Dr Mahathir also underlined the need for the public and private sectors to co-operate.

This, he said, could go a long way to help the country grab the vast economic opportunities available.

Dr Mahathir also spoke of the need to persist with anti-corruption measures, although the percentage of those involved was small.

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