

23 APR 1996  
PM-Circulars  
GOVT CIRCULARS ARE NO LAUGHING MATTER, SAYS PM

By: Salbiah Said

MALTA, April 23 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad says circulars despatched to government departments are no laughing matter.

"The government has documented many reforms to improve the government machinery but some civil servants are not happy as they feel too many circulars are being circulated to the different departments," he said.

"They are necessary, so don't poke fun at circulars. I don't see how else we can communicate if we do not send them circulars," he told the Malaysian media before leaving here for Pisa, Italy, on a private visit last night.

Dr Mahathir was accompanied by his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali.

Dr Mahathir was here to deliver a keynote address at the Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management's (Capam) second biennial conference on Monday.

Malta's Prime Minister Dr Edward Fenech Adami opened the four-day conference which is attended by delegates from 51 member countries.

Dr Mahathir said Capam can play a vital role in the exchange of information on reforms taking place, in particular in member countries of the Commonwealth.

On the Malaysia Incorporated concept, he said he was happy with the level of cooperation between the government and the private sector since its launch in 1980, particularly in obtaining licences or approval from government agencies or relevant authorities.

Asked on the Interpretation Act, a major reform introduced by the Maltese government last Friday to ensure that the government becomes more transparent for public scrutiny, he said Malaysia has its Official Secrets Act.

"No government can function completely transparent as this can have a reverse impact ... corruption can take place.

"If we reveal everything we want, then people can always inform certain people who are interested in tendering. We can only reveal information which is relevant.

"I think every government has to maintain a certain degree of secrecy. Otherwise, there is no way we can conduct our administration."

On privatisation, he said, Malaysia is way ahead compared to other countries. Some countries, he said, had given up, but in Malaysia the programme is actively being pursued as the country has a good concept on privatisation.

For instance, privatisation for some countries meant removing workers who were superfluous. "In Malaysia, we guarantee workers will not lose as a result of privatisation. The salary paid to them must be superior to what is offered by the government," he said.

"Take Port Klang for example. It is the workers who decided to privatise because they felt that container terminal workers were getting higher salaries and bonuses and they did not want to be left behind, so the government had to privatise the whole port.

"In Malaysia, the private sector might come up with a proposal to build a road linking one point to another, although the government has no plans. If we find that it is a good idea, then we will let them privatise."

To date, the government has listed about 200 potential privatisation

projects. Of these, 100 had been privatised.

On the objective of striving to achieve ISO 9000 standard in government services, Dr Mahathir said it is a bold initiative to be adopted for the entire public service. The ISO 9000 standard contains 20 elements that are crucial for establishing a quality management system. -- BERNAMA

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