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Sarji-Quality
ISO 9000 IN TOP GEAR BY YEAR 2000, SAYS SARJI

By: Salbiah said

ST JULIANS (MALTA), April 23 (Bernama) -- By the year 2000, all government agencies are expected to adopt ISO 9000 -- a new and bold initiative which represents internationally recognised standards for quality assurance and management.

The ISO 9000 series of standards contains 20 elements encompassing the important aspects of quality management that would provide the basis for a systematic method of working that is more structured, uniform and consistent in the understanding of ISO 9000.

Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Ahmad Sarji Abdul Hamid said detailed guidelines had already been prepared and this would be followed by training programmes to create awareness and enhancement in the understanding of ISO 9000.

With the modernisation and improvements implemented by government agencies over the past few years such as the manual of office procedures, desk files, clients charter, service recovery systems, checklist and quality control circles, a strong foundation has been built for the adoption of ISO 9000.

Ahmad Sarji said this in a paper on "Providing High Quality Services" at the end of the four-day Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management's (CAPAM) second biennial conference here.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad left yesterday for Pisa, Italy, for a private visit after delivering a keynote address at the CAPAM meeting which saw the participation of 250 delegates from 51 countries.

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

Ahmad Sarji, the newly elected CAPAM President, said the ISO 9000 series would enable government agencies to develop a well-planned and comprehensive quality assurance and management system.

At the same time, the public service would continue to introduce initiatives to improve the quality management system although the existing system had improved the quality of services delivered.

The ever changing global environment all contributed to a situation where the public service cannot afford to rest on its laurels.

"It must relentlessly pursue the goal of higher quality services at all times," he said.

In the next few years, the Malaysian public service would focus on two major areas -- enhancing the quality management system and the provision of more sophisticated delivery systems -- in its reform agenda, he said.

Ahmad Sarji said: "The public service, to my mind, will remain an important and valued institution to serve the citizenry as the demands of the economic growth in the midst of global challenges will lead to a continuous refocussing of the role of the public service."

The thrust, he believed, was still centred on the need for a strong customer-oriented public service that is imbued with the ethos of quality, global outlook and a strong underpinning in ethics and values.

He said one of the major efforts to instil positive work culture was the implementation of a code of ethics. These programmes include the introduction of detailed procedures and desk files; the establishment of quality control circles and the implementation of productivity measurement.

A major landmark in the history of the administrative reform efforts in Malaysia was the launching of the excellent work culture movement aimed at enhancing public awareness of the importance of providing quality services,

thereby institutionalising a quality culture where a mind-set on quality became a way of life, he said.

The total quality management was also implemented; a management philosophy that upholds the principle of participatory management which promotes employee participation while emphasizing the importance of customer satisfaction and continuous improvement.

In this programme, all public sector agencies are required to formulate their respective mission statement through the process of strategic quality planning to galvanise public sector agencies to be market-driven and to institutionalise a distinct customer-orientation in the delivery of services.

In this context, the clients charter was introduced in 1993 -- a written commitment made by all government agencies pertaining to the delivery of outputs or services to their customers.

Another critical factor contributing to the effectiveness of the clients charter is its ability to provide service recovery mechanism in instances where pledges contained in the respective charters cannot be fulfilled.

"Such service failures must be addressed and agencies must be ready at all times to restore the satisfaction of customers by activating a planned service recovery system. We believe the clients charter is the starting point in bringing about the empowerment of the citizenry vis-a-vis the civil service."

A key focus area in the streamlining of rules and regulations in the Malaysian public service was carried out since 1990 to streamline, simplify and eliminate procedures and regulations deemed cumbersome by the customers. A number of innovations were introduced on information technology.

Ahmad Sarji said a major office automation programme to replace storage and retrieval and communication systems had also been undertaken to increase efficiency and enhance productivity as Malaysia moves towards a paperless civil service.

A major initiative in information technology was the establishment of the civil service link in 1994 -- the forerunner of a new culture in the civil service which stresses on a more systematic information collection and management system. -- BERNAMA

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