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Paying taxes, fines, fees through kiosks

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - The first step towards a paperless government becomes real in September when Malaysians begin paying income taxes, traffic fines and driving licence and passport fees through people-friendly machines called transaction kiosks.

The kiosks, which will be available at major shopping complexes and banks in the Klang Valley as a pilot project, operate somewhat similar to the ubiquitous automated teller machine.

Customers wanting to transact through the kiosks need to purchase a pre-paid multi-purpose card.

"Under the electronic government programme, the project will increase public sector efficiency in providing simpler and quality service through the use of the latest information technology," Chief Secretary to the Government Datuk Paduka Abdul Halim Ali told a Press conference today at the Prime Minister's Department.

Although the idea of paying for various utilities through a machine was indicated earlier, this is the first time a date has been fixed for its implementation.

Once the pilot project succeeds, the system will be extended to the following:

- * services requiring approvals of applications through the Electronic Data Interchange;
- * on-line corporate services like business registration, licensing and corporate tax;
- * on-line government information retrieval services, patent, copyright and trade mark registration services; and,
- * video-conferencing between the Prime Minister and managing directors from the private sector.

As the technology improves, the system may be further extended to registering birth and marriages and payment of pensions.

The electronic government is one of the flagships that will be developed under the Multimedia Super Corridor launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad last August.

Malaysian Administrative Modernisation and Management Planning Unit is the agency responsible for implementing the electronic government programme. It will encompass intra-government, citizen-to-government and business-to-government communications.

Halim said other advanced technology applications being developed were the intra-ministry and Intranet between ministries, video-conferencing, multimedia mobile office, archiving and filing, digitally-shared data systems and digital signatures.

The implementation of the electronic government is planned in four phases covering eight years:

- * First Phase (1995-2000): Upgrading the Prime Minister's office using the latest information technology and management processes by September 1998, and expanded to other ministries by 2000;
- * Second Phase (mid-2000): Implementation of intra and inter-agency communications;
- * Third Phase (2000-2005): Focus on expanding and developing applications at ministry level; and,
- * Fourth Phase (2005-2008): Public and private sectors obtain a variety of services through the electronic network.

"Efforts towards a paperless civil service would remain the main agenda for the Government to improve efficiency and minimise paper usage in everyday transactions," he said.

Earlier, Halim launched the seventh report on The Civil Service of Malaysia: Towards Excellence Through ISO 9000

Published in Bahasa Malaysia and English, the book outlines the progress and development achieved by the public services throughout the whole of last year.

"We hope every department and agency will attain the ISO 9000 standard for at least one of their services by 2000," he said.

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