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PM: All organisations should think global

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - All organisations, whether large or small, should think "global" and aim towards manufacturing products and providing services which meet international standards, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said it was time for these organisations, whether they were Government departments, private companies or those in the social sector, to discard the notion that they were operating only in Malaysia as "protected institutions".

They should aim to improve their management system and provide high quality products or services acceptable to the international community.

"To ensure this is achieved, the best step will be for us to adopt a quality standard recognised by most nations, such as the ISO 9000 standard," he said.

Dr Mahathir was speaking at the 1996 Prime Minister's Quality Award ceremony and the opening of the National Symposium on MS ISO 9000 at the Shangri-La hotel.

He said as a trading nation, Malaysia faced competition from all corners at all times.

"The open global market not only provides avenues for trading nations to compete but also the opportunities for new trading countries to emerge as important players.

"As such, competitions become tougher," he said.

Dr Mahathir said although Malaysia could be considered successful, complacency should not set in.

"Negligence and complacency will result in us being left out and fail in our bid to compete. To continue being successful, we should be quick in grabbing opportunities," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the Government was proud to have a civil service which was responsive to changes to improve efficiency, management and administration in the public sector.

He said the country's civil service had shown remarkable improvement in their quality of service.

"There is a clear change in the attitude of civil servants on their role in national development."

He said the civil servants were beginning to realise that the profits reaped by the private sector enabled the Government to develop various socio-economic projects for the benefit of the people.

"They had accepted the reality that the private sector was their main partner in the country's development and as a client, it was important that the private sector be treated well.

"The change in perception is the main factor contributing to the moulding of a new culture which gave importance to quality service to clients," he said.

He said the process to bring about a change in attitude and work culture took a long time and it would gradually be absorbed by all levels of the public service.

The change in attitude and work culture should be the prime driving force for Government employees to carry out their duties pro-actively," he said.

Dr Mahathir said many factors came into play when carrying out an activity and all the factors must be administered well to achieve the

desired objectives.

"We know the importance of a vision charter and clear objectives of an organisation. This needs to be complemented with strategic and efficient management in many aspects like human resources, financial and information management," he said.

He said quality work culture, noble values and positive work ethics were vital to achieve excellence.

Dr Mahathir said the public sector must value the contributions of the private sector to the country's development and accept the reality that theirs was the main driving force for the country's rapid growth.

He said the private sector played an important role in taking over the services provided by the Government by way of privatisation.

He also attributed the private sector's success in securing investment opportunities overseas to the support of the Government administration which ensured a conducive investment climate.

"I am confident the private sector will continue to prosper and play a vital role in our efforts to realise the country's vision," he said.

He said under the Seventh Malaysia Plan, investments were expected to grow at 5.6 per cent a year with the private sector playing a meaningful role.

Dr Mahathir also said that Malaysians should accept the reality that rapid growth would bring about social problems and moral decadence as experienced by developed countries.

He said incidences in the developed countries should be taken as a lesson by Malaysia to be more sensitive to social ills like drug addiction, AIDS, dumping of babies, child abuse and loafing among youths.

On the country's economic growth driven by technology and high productivity, Dr Mahathir said the move required pro-active efforts in boosting work efficiency and effective management skills.

"In this regard, we need to speed up the shift towards value-added activities based on high technology. The shift requires expertise in science and technology, research and development," he said.

He also said the rapid growth of information technology should be utilised fully.

Dr Mahathir said the ISO 9000 series which was popular with the private sector and now being introduced in the public sector was a universal quality standard.

Countries like Britain, the United States, Finland, Belgium, Switzerland, Canada and New Zealand had adopted the standard in certain departments and agencies.

"For private companies, attaining the ISO 9000 quality certification is very valuable as it proves their quality management system for their products and services," he said.

Later, when speaking to reporters, Dr Mahathir said he was confident that Malaysia's civil service would achieve the ISO 9000 quality standard by the year 2000 in tandem with the country's rapid growth.

"I am confident with their (government departments') pro-active measures, they can achieve it ... we did not start bit by bit, but on a broad front," he said.

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