

PM's Dept pays up promptly this time

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PUTRAJAYA: The Prime Minister's Department paid 98.5% of its bills within seven days in January, down from as long as a month last year.

This shows that initiatives to reduce red tape such as the government payments system

are beginning to show results, Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Mohamad Sidek Hassan said.

Mohd Sidek, who co-chairs the 25-member high-powered panel Pemudah to improve the public delivery system, said the task force, which holds its inaugural meeting today, hopes to eventually resolve all administrative and other issues slowing down business.

"In terms of funding under the Ninth Malaysia Plan, the PM's Department is the biggest recipient and yet we can do this," he told Reuters in an interview.

"Nothing is sacrosanct. The PM had given us six months (to deliver). Like all things, there's no end to it. But we can start with low-hanging fruit"

To illustrate the new spirit that the prime minister is trying to infuse in the ranks of his administrators, Mohd Sidek said the government recently arranged a session for ministers and high-ranking officials with Chan Kim, one of the authors of the best-selling management book *Blue Ocean Strategy: How to Create Uncontested Market Space and Make the Competition Irrelevant*.

"People (elsewhere) are approving things in 10 days. You cannot do it (here) in 10 days."

He said Malaysia should not rest on its laurels despite being the world's 18th largest trading nation.

"We have to compete not only for foreign investors but also domestic investors. Investors have the option of staying here or moving somewhere else."