

Penyampai : TAN SRI DATO SERI AHMAD SARJI BIN ABDUL HAMID
Tajuk : THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE FORUM ON 'DEALING WITH THE MALAYSIAN CIVIL SERVICE',
Lokasi :
Tarikh : 21-10-1993

I am greatly honoured to be invited to officiate at this function which symbolises the growing, healthy trend of joint activities between the civil service and the private sector, within the context of Malaysia Incorporated. This function marks the beginning of a forum on "Dealing With The Civil Service" jointly organised by the Malaysian Administrative Modernisation and Management Planning Unit (MAMPU) and the Malaysian Institute of Management (MIM). I am pleased that the General Circular Letter No. 2 of 1993 entitled "Guidelines On The Involvement Of Government Agencies And Public Officials In Conferences/ Seminars/Workshops/Training Programmes Organised By The Private Sector" which was brought into effect early this year has been the catalyst for many such joint activities.

On the one hand, government departments and civil servants are now able to clearly define their role and responsibilities in the aspect of joint activities with the private sector. On the other hand, the private sector has also been facilitated in understanding the do's and don'ts in undertaking such activities. This has greatly facilitated the smooth running of joint programmes which have proved to be mutually beneficial.

The thrust of the improvement programmes in the Public Service at present is on the accelerated implementation of those programmes which will contribute to increased efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of services rendered to the public. The focus now is in ensuring that the output produced by the civil service has the necessary quality features required by the clients, namely timeliness, reliability, safety, and easy availability. We realise that time and timeliness is of the essence in business operations. Many government departments which have dealings with the private sector such as in the issuance of licences, permits and other approvals have been computerised. The public is being provided with the information regarding the processes or steps involved in administrative activities. A few of the steps has been reduced, streamlined and automated to reduce the time period required for decision-making in the delivery of licenses or permits. Some forms to be used by the clients in applying for permits or licences have been redesigned and simplified to facilitate the user. The establishment of certain one-stop licensing centres has been expanded to ensure that the clients do not have to visit various departments to obtain all the necessary approvals for their operations.

Other measures to improve the timeliness of service delivery are also being implemented. Precise time norms have been set for most activities carried out by government departments. In the book "Dealing with the Malaysian Civil Service", government departments have made their commitment very transparent by stating the time taken to make a decision with respect to applications for licenses, permits etc. The internal process within government departments are also being streamlined. To ensure timely action by civil servants, we introduce the 'work action form' which is required to be clipped on to any file where a major action is being taken, indicating the time- targets for each process and the name of the officer involved in taking the action. In this way, any undue delay is easily detected and action can be initiated against the officer responsible for such delays.

The most significant innovation is the introduction of the Client's Charter. The Client's Charter is a written commitment on the part of Government departments as to the quality standards of the service or output produced by them for their clients. These standards will be prominently displayed for the information of the clients. Where a department is unable to fulfil its commitment, a service recovery mechanism will be available to the clients to rectify the problem. All Government departments have been given until the end of this month to announce and display their client's charter. This is expected to begin a significant new era in public administration marked by the confidence of departments in providing quality services and their increased readiness for public accountability. Government departments and agencies are required to review their charter from time to time to further improve the current quality standards.

Another significant service to be rendered by the civil service will be the Civil Service Link which was announced recently. The Civil Service Link (CSL) will be a computer-based, one-stop centre which will be

a repository for a wide variety of information about Government Ministries and departments considered to be of use especially to the private sector and potential investors.

For a start, the CSL will contain information already contained in the book "Dealing With The Malaysian Civil Service" which was launched by the Prime Minister in June this year. This includes information on the profiles of Ministries and Departments which have major dealings with the private sector, including information such as their organisation structures, services provided, and the processes and forms involved in obtaining these services.

Further user surveys are being carried out by MAMPU to identify the information needs of its CSL potential users, to ensure the usefulness of the information stored in the CSL.

It is interesting to note that many of the administrative innovations or changes carried out by the civil service originate from the feedback received from the general public as well as the private sector. This is not to say that the civil service, on its own, is incapable of improvement or innovation. One important avenue of consultation is the Malaysia Incorporated Panels which have been established in most of the Ministries and Departments which have frequent dealings with the private sector. I am happy to note from recent feedback given by Ministries and Departments that these Panels are more active now and constitute the mechanism for consultation and discussion between senior civil servants and chief executive officers or managing directors of companies. The Malaysia Incorporated Officials Level Committee, which I chair, incorporates a wide representation of interest groups from the chambers of commerce, industry associations and the mass media. This Committee will meet more frequently to identify, among other programmes, avenues for joint activities in the area of implementation of the Malaysia Incorporated Policy at the official's level. One programme already initiated is joint action in strengthening Malaysia's civil service relationship with bureaucrats in the People's Republic of China.

More joint training programmes between the civil service and the private sector are also being initiated for mutual benefit. Now, more multi-national companies have indicated their interest and commitment to receiving civil servants for attachment programmes. This is a result of the successful attachment programme initiated by the British-Malaysian Industry and Trade Association (BMITA) and other European companies. Negotiations are underway for similar attachment programmes for civil servants in Japanese and American companies. I would like to stress the importance of this training programme which gives civil servants the opportunity to experience the rigours of the business world operations as well as the exposure to superior and state-of-the-art management systems found in the foreign corporations. Such exposure will assist the civil servants to appreciate the essentials and constraints of the business operations. Candidates for these attachment programmes are identified through a rigorous selection process from mid-level executive and management personnel who have the potential to hold senior civil service posts in the future.

The civil service is committed to the cultivation of a culture of performance. At the same time, the civil service can also be the crux of the government's most enduring performance problems. There is a need to reduce rules and regulations, excessive paperwork and of requirements to secure multiple approvals for routine decisions. Of course, many of these laws, rules, and surveillance procedures exist to prevent organized interests from unfairly penetrating the governance process and tenured civil servants from following their will instead of the public interest. Indeed, protecting the civil service from these dangers has led to the creation of the system. But bureaucratic constraints can also have perverse effects, such as delays, increased costs and forfeiture of business and other opportunities by the clients. So the civil service, through the Malaysia Incorporated committees, is open to suggestions. Chambers of commerce, business councils, industry associations, and such NGOs as the Malaysian Institute of Management can provide the specific feedback to the civil service, on delays and excessive paperwork. These organizations may also submit their recommendations for deregulation, modification in our forms, and other forms of feedback. In this respect, we recognize the work of the Malaysian International Chamber of Commerce and Industry which regularly submits reports to the government known as the "Chamber's Business Assessment Survey", covering such matters as "the speed of government approvals", "the reasonableness of authorities" and "the services and infrastructure status" which relate to the performance of certain government departments and agencies. The chamber is carrying out a more

detailed follow-up survey to establish the reasons for the "poor rating" of some departments. If many more chambers of commerce, business councils and NGO's are forthcoming with their proposals for the improvements of the civil service delivery system, the civil service will be the richer in innovative ideas.

Bureaucrats nowadays can no longer use their specialized information to erect defences against intrusion by outsiders and even against close scrutiny within the department. We are an accountable civil service. We welcome seminars such as this one organized by the MIM for our top officials. Senior civil servants, in particular, must promote within their departments a culture that values a proactive, problem-solving attitude to replace the reactive, problem- avoiding attitude. I have the pleasure to officially declare this Forum open.