

Penyampai : TAN SRI ABDUL HALIM BIN ALI
Tajuk : THE OPENING OF THE SEMINAR ON THE TRANSITION TO ELECTRONIC
RECORDS AS A STRATEGIC RESOURCE
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Let me begin by warmly welcoming all participants, observers and the experts from overseas and Malaysia to this seminar. We certainly appreciate the privilege and honour given to our country to be host to this important gathering.

2. Administrative responsibility, accountability and transparency are fundamental principles in good governance. Adherence to these principles can be further enhanced if we can establish the necessary process and system that can sustain and nourish them. One such system is the management of public records. These records are also important for research and education activities.

Historians and those involved in the study of civilisations, culture and national heritage depend on these records for their works. We owe it to our posterity to ensure that the records are well maintained, documented and managed for easy retrieval. The present and future proceedings in legal courts may depend heavily on the availability and the quality of the records maintained.

Ladies and gentlemen,

3. No organisation can become effective or indeed survive, if it fails to recognise and adept itself to the changes in the task environment. This principle is certainly very relevant to those who are involved in record management and archival practices. We are aware that a major change or shift is taking place in the public service and other organisations in the country, i.e the transition from paper based records to electronic records. The factor that drive these changes is the tremendous increase in the application and utilisation of computers, information technology and multimedia in the work-processes. Information Technology has certainly demonstrated its effectiveness in enhancing productivity, the delivery of Quality product and services. Work- processes are speeded up leading to timely and just-in- time delivery of services. Errors are reduced.

Organisations can now handle complexity in work- processes. Organisations are more able to provide better customer service, because information is on-line and in- time.

4. In Malaysia the transition to electronic records is given a further impetus due to two major policy initiatives, i.e : (a) The movement towards a paperless bureaucracy, and (b) The implementation of the Electronic Government.

5. In 1996 the Government of Malaysia launched the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC). The MSC will provide a world-class environment for the germination of multi- media-based technology and the development of sophisticated IT applications. Seven flagship applications have been identified as catalysts in the development of the MSC namely, Electronic Government, Telemedicine, Smart School, Multipurpose card, Research and Development Cluster, Worldwide Manufacturing Web and Borderless Marketing.

6. One of the flagship applications that is being actively developed is Electronic Government (EG), designed to upgrade the efficiency and effectiveness of the administrative machinery through the combination of information technology and the sophistication of multimedia. In terms of scope, EG covers services between the Government and the public, the Government and the private sector as well as both inter-agency and intra- agency Government processes. As a start, five pilot applications have been chosen for implementation. In time, these IT applications will be extended to all the major work processes and to all the government departments throughout the country.

7. The objectives of the EG effort go far beyond the mere computerisation of Government agencies. It will bring about a new paradigm in Government service delivery the effect of which will be felt by the

community at large. Processes involving the daily lives of citizens such as the registration of births, school registration, the issuance and renewal of identify cards and driving licences as well as the filing of tax returns will be transacted electronically. Government-business transactions such as business registration, company registration, tax payment, issuance of import/export licences and procurement will undergo changes through the use of information technology and multimedia. EG will also facilitate intra-agency connectivity resulting in more efficient and effective communications and thus lead to higher productivity. All these benefits will as a whole facilitate the creation of an efficient and paperless administrative machinery.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

8. There is obviously a compelling need to prepare ourselves to meet the challenges arising from the change brought about by IT. The transition from paper-based records to electronic records have to be effectively managed. The planning work has to be done early before the systems go into full operation and institutionalised. I am informed that one major issue to be faced is the admissability of electronic records as evidence in court proceedings. Electronic records are only admissable when it can be demonstrated that they have been well managed from the point of creation to the final stage of disposition. We have also to face the issue of the difficulty in maintaining these records over time due to preservation problems or advances in hardware or softwares. We certainly need a comprehensive guideline on the rules and technology of the management of electronic records. We need to ensure that everybody fully understands his duties and responsibilities in the system.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

9. The Seminar participants, observers and experts are gathered here, under the auspices of the Commonwealth. It is indeed heartening to find that in spite of the diversity of the countries constituting the Commonwealth, we still manage to find a common pattern in our responses to the challenges that affect the well-being and quality of the Public Service. In this connection, I wish to acknowledge how greatly the Malaysian civil service has benefitted from its long standing relationship with member countries of the Commonwealth. The present seminar represents yet another opportunity for us to share experiences in administrative reforms and improvements.

10. In closing, allow me to thank the International Records Management Trust (IRMT) for having chosen to organise this Seminar in Malaysia. The close links between the IRMT and the National Archives of Malaysia had made this cooperative endeavour a great success. I wish to also express thanks to the Malaysian Administrative Modernization and Management Planning Unit (MAMPU) for having assisted the National Archives of Malaysia in the organisation of the Seminar. Lastly, to all the participants and observers, may I express my sincere hopes that you will have a fruitful seminar over the next four days, and a pleasant stay in our country.

With this, I wish to hereby declare the Seminar on 'The Transition to Electronic Records As a Strategic Resource' officially open.