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CHALLENGES OF THE DEMOCRATISATION AND GOOD GOVERNANCE IN THE MALAYSIAN
PUBLIC SECTOR

Bismillahir rahmanir rahim

Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh and a very Good Evening.

Y. Bhg. Tan Sri Datuk Arshad Ayub Chairman of the Board of Directors University of Malaya

Y. Bhg. Dato’ Prof Muhd Amin
Deputy Vice-Chancellor
University of Malaya

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and gentlemen

I am pleased to be here this evening and I thank the International Institute of Public Policy and Management (INPUMA), University of Malaya, for the invitation to officially close the International Conference on “The Challenges of Democratisation and Good Governance in the Malaysian Public Sector”.

2. In one of my first addresses as Chief Secretary to the Government, on 23 November 2006, to be exact, I outlined my thoughts on governance and integrity in the public service.

3. Today I want to reiterate the point I made then. Issues of governance and integrity have the ability to shape public and international opinion of Malaysia vis-à-vis our competitors and as such can impact both domestic and foreign investor confidence. As an open economy which is trade and investment-dependent, Malaysia cannot ignore the implications of good governance.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

4. Often the discussions on governance tend to be limited to corruption. I am glad that in this two-day conference the presentations have taken a broader perspective and encompassed transparency, the impact of governance on nation-building, as well as accountability at the federal, state and local levels of Government.

5. I consider governance and integrity as key to efficient and effective delivery of public service. Issues of governance not only impact perception of Government effectiveness, but they also have very real economic costs. A system that is built around a lack of transparency and accountability can lead to misallocation of resources. Yesterday I addressed the National Asset and Facility Management Convention. The basis of the process and integrity of the Government Procurement system is sound governance. Any weakness in the process can result in significant economic costs to the country.

6. At present there are guidelines in place to ensure systematic asset management. There are also oversight mechanisms such as the Public Accounts Committee and a vigilant media which have taken on the role of “watch-dogs” of the system. The challenge for the public sector is to improve governance and work towards making the “watch-dog” role of both the PAC and the media redundant.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

7. Good governance involves Government's collaboration with private sector and all stakeholders in decision-making. For the Malaysian public service today, this collaboration is not an option. The voice of all stakeholders must be given the opportunity to be heard.

8. At the highest level in the public sector the Special Task Force to Facilitate Business, or PEMUDAH, set up on 7 February 2007, exemplifies what we mean by public-private sector collaboration towards enhancing national competitiveness. Often the private sector and the media see their role as that of highlighting the problems and shortcomings in the system. Not so in this Task Force. The private sector members in PEMUDAH not only draw attention to problems that need to be addressed, but more importantly, they contribute meaningfully towards decision-making and solutions.

9. This mechanism has also been effective in getting both sides to understand each other in the process of bringing improvements to the public delivery system. I expect to see this collaboration replicated across all levels of the public sector.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

10. I hope that these past two days have heightened the awareness of participants on the importance of good governance including in the context of managing ideological and political diversity in Malaysia.

11. I commend INPUMA and University of Malaya for organising this International Conference. Discourse and intellectually stimulating discussions are important. But even more important is the next course of action. What exactly are the deliverables from these two days? And what next? It is important to consider the practical contributions and outcomes of such engagements. Let these not remain just at the intellectual or academic level.

12. Finally, with Bismillahir rahmanir rahim, I officially close the International Conference on "The Challenges of the Democratisation and Good Governance in the Malaysian Public Sector".

Thank you.