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Tajuk : THE GOVERNMENT LEADERS' CONFERENCE
Lokasi : INTAN BUKIT KIARA
Tarikh : 09-06-2003

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim Assalamualaikum warahmatullah and a very good morning.

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen, Let me begin by warmly welcoming all participants, speakers and presenters, both from the public and private sectors, to the Government Leaders Conference 2003. I am honoured to be here, and I would like to thank the joint organizers, Microsoft, MAMPU, INTAN and the Ministry of Energy Communications and Multimedia, for inviting me to officiate and to deliver the keynote address for this Conference.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

2. It is almost a year ago that I spoke at the Malaysian E-Government Conference on which occasion I said that the success of E-Government is very much dependent on how citizen-centric we can make our services, and the successful delivery of those services. E-Government is about delivering services to citizens and businesses that meet their needs, rather than according to the services of the agencies delivering them.

3. Citizens, consumers and businesses expect efficient service from the private sector and they are increasingly demanding more of the same from the public sector. When twenty four times seven (24x7) availability, convenience, fast delivery, customer focus and personalization becomes the norm in the public sector, it would not only make life easier, it would fundamentally change the way people view government itself. Ultimately, E-Government must be about meeting the needs of citizens and businesses and improving the quality of life or environment in which they live and work. Even when E-Government seeks to improve internal government processes, the end goal should be making government serve citizens better. And that means recognizing the diverse needs of citizens, and their roles as taxpayers, constituents, investors, employers, employees, parents, students and community leaders.

4. We also need to consider that E-Government strategies can have a powerful catalytic effect on business in general. Just as in the private sector, where many large enterprises have pushed their suppliers and partners into doing business with them through online exchanges, so can government. We all know that the transformation comes not only from moving services on-line, but also from a re-engineered organizational process.

5. As trusted civil servants, we have done a tremendous job in helping the country grow, enjoy stability, unity and prosperity in the past two decades. Under the visionary leadership of our Prime Minister, who is Engineer Extraordinaire, we all had a hand in the rapid modernization of Malaysia. If we look back over the past two decades, it is government that has been at the forefront of change. And we have managed it commendably given the unique domestic and global challenges that we have faced.

6. Today, we have information and communication technology (ICT) as a tool to drive for greater efficiency. ICT is seen by many as a blessing because it has dramatically transformed the way we live, learn, work and play. Those who have not embraced it are at a distinct disadvantage. But there is no turning back.

Our challenge is to continue to forge ahead and to build bridges to bring across the 'have-nots'. We have much to achieve, and technology is progressing every day.

7. One strength that we can build on is the successful implementation of E-Government in the public sector. Most significantly, we have moved several government processes and services online, namely, the eProcurement; Project Monitoring System; on-line payment; Electronic Labour Exchange; E-Syariah

and HRMIS projects. While we can talk about these achievements, there are still gaps about the level of service delivery, and the perceived value of that delivery, from our most important constituents - the citizens.

8. In a report by a leading consulting group, recently released this year, many governments are referring to their taxpayers as customers. It may be a mere word, perhaps, but the word "customer" can be powerful. It helps to inculcate certain feelings of service, value, relationship, measurement, and accountability. Although we do not face the same bottom-line pressures as those in the private sector, our focus should still be on service quality.

9. In the same report, which outlines the five stages of E-Government maturity, and surveyed the status of E- Government across 22 countries, Malaysia is in the third stage - service availability, two levels below stage five - 'service transformation'. Stage three of maturity means that we have, among others, basic portals, many services available online and cross- agency cooperation.

10. Let me say that this is a great achievement since we launched the Multimedia Super Corridor in 1996, and started the E-Government flagship application in 1997.

In under a decade, we have literally leap-frogged to give ourselves first-world infrastructure and facilities. We now need to move up the scale in which the basic services we offer online will create new avenues for value-added services. I would urge you to listen to your customers. Hear their grouses, and respond appropriately. In this fast era, I would venture to say that our customers' biggest "buyer value" is time and information. Reducing the time it takes to complete a service or transaction, and the level of completeness of the information surrounding that service, will inevitably improve the customer experience.

11. Climbing this ladder is neither easy nor cheap.

And let us keep in mind that technology alone does not bring about reform. It will require time, resources, political will, and mental, emotional, psychological strength and resilience from all of us. The 'how' in moving forward is clear to us, so I am not going to elaborate on the methods and tools that are available to us in transforming government.

12. What I would like to entreat you are to reinforce the five elements of e-Government - that is the E, the G, the O, the V and the T - the main initials for E- Govt.

Excellence

13. First, the E for excellence. We pride ourselves in having first-world facilities and infrastructure.

We have the "hardware," but still lack the "mindware." It is our job to change this perception. E-Government is going to help us strive for, and deliver, excellence across the board. When we engage electronically with our customers, our partners, our colleagues, the business community and visitors to our country, E- Government will help put a smile on the faces of our customers when we deliver excellence through our front line agencies.

Good Governance

14. Second is the G for good governance. We may not think of ourselves as being in business in the commercial sense, but good governance is our forte. E- Government will, if nothing else, allow us to become more transparent, more accountable, to our customers.

Like a commercial entity, we will be able to deliver a return on investment to our shareholders. Our customers invest their trust, and money in us to deliver value and good service.

15. E-Government is going to empower all of us. It is said that the best E-Government experts are its

citizens, because the ultimate goal is to serve them.

In the commercial world, businesses often measure customer satisfaction so that they can further improve or add value to those services and products. This means that the customer has some influence on the product or service, and its delivery. The same principles apply in the public sector. E-Government is going to vest authority and control, to a certain extent, with the users of government services, which means it will also push us, the public sector, to be more customer-focused and citizen-centric - because we, too, are users of these services.

Opportunity

16. Third, the O for opportunity. E-Government is going to create opportunities for everyone, from all walks of life. Upstream - pushing us to engage in more research and development; and downstream - extending the value chain of goods and services. If our customers benefit, it stands to reason that the government will benefit through increased fiscal revenues.

17. At the same time, E-Government will foster an entrepreneurial spirit among all of us. Because of the nature of E-Government, and the fact that many countries and national governments must continuously evolve, we are naturally forced to reinvent ourselves regularly. We will need to be more innovative, redefine service targets and create new channels of delivery, new processes or operational models, to remain competitive.

Visibility 18. Fourth is the V for visibility. In the years under the leadership of our Prime Minister, Malaysia's visibility has greatly increased. We are on the global map, for better or for worse. But with successful implementation of E-Government, our visibility will increase and be enhanced ten-fold, and in a positive manner. The Multimedia Super Corridor has already given us a certain level and type of visibility, but we need to take that one-step further by showing the world that we can deliver the vision. If we need to move to the next stage of E-Government, which is, the stage of mature delivery, we have to be more rigorous and structure service providers, namely, our government agencies around customer needs.

Transformation

19. Finally, the T for transformation. E-Government will make us more nimble, agile - qualities with which entrepreneurs are typically associated. E-Government must help us to streamline our processes for the benefit of our corporate and retail customers and stakeholders. One of the greatest problems for anyone dealing with government is its sheer complexity. This complexity is often reflected in the requirement to get multiple approvals from multiple agencies and the time taken to get those approvals.

20. The outcome of E-Government is the eventual transformation into a digital democracy, where governments use the web to make us more transparent, accountable; evolve new methods of consultation and engagement with our customers. But the transformation encompasses more than that. The impact is going to be manifested in many areas, some I have already touched on: bridging the digital divide; improved public information; enhanced learning resources and facilities; and greater potential for national and economic growth.

Ladies and gentlemen,

21. I am sure, implementing E-Government strategies will be neither easy nor quick, but it is giving us a golden opportunity to re-invent ourselves. For tomorrow's e-citizens and e-businesses, E-Government is mostly good news. It offers the potential for services that are designed based on customers' needs, and available to them on their own terms - when they want them, and how they like them.

22. Going forward, the government continues to strategise and implement initiatives to deliver our commitment to enhanced service delivery. One of the latest initiatives is the setting up of the Strategic Thrust Committee on the Government Delivery System.

This committee is one of nine strategic thrust committees established specifically to upgrade the government delivery system to enhance national competitiveness in the current challenging economic environment.

23. A number of recommendations were made for improvements and changes in nine (9) focus areas - they have been endorsed as announced under the recent stimulus package. The focus areas are : i) To support and facilitate investment in the manufacturing sector. For this, the Malaysian Industrial Development Authority (MIDA) will appoint special project officers to hand-hold and assist investors in obtaining all necessary approvals for projects until they are operational; ii) The processing and approvals for Building Plans and the Certificate of Fitness for Occupation (CFO) will be expedited; iii) For land alienation and land use conversion, a fast-track system will be established and State Economic Planning Units are appointed as one-stop processing centres for such applications; iv) The Department of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH) will improve the approval process for designs and installation as well as issuance of the Certificate of Fitness for Machinery; v) To facilitate the application process for permits and business licenses; vi) Implementing the Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) at all ports and airports by October 2003 and the provision of paperless services by April 2004; vii) Implementing a Customs Golden Client programme to accord green-lane privileges at entry and exit points to traders who contribute substantially to tax revenue and have good track record of tax payments; viii) Providing on-line submissions, validations and payments of excise duty, sales tax and service tax; and ix) Reducing processing time for stamping documents through e-stamping.

24. The challenge is now for the relevant agencies to implement them in a timely manner to support the government's overall agenda to strengthen the economy and minimise any fallout from the global environment.

25. Current advancement in Public Sector service delivery involves being able to provide services over the counter, via the Internet, telephone, SMS or any other delivery channels. It is also equally important that the Public Sector provides end-to-end services that involve "cross-agency" collaboration. This will ensure that the Government portrays the image of "One Government" to the Citizens and Businesses, instead of the view of a myriad of agencies and departments.

26. In this regard, the government has embarked on a study to develop the Malaysian Public Sector ICT Strategic Plan that will serve as the blueprint for future ICT development and implementation in the Malaysian Public Sector. The ICT blueprint is intended to meet the current and future requirements of the Public Sector. It also charts the Malaysian Public Sector's path towards an electronic and join-up Government that is able to provide seamless services and information to the Citizen and Businesses.

Understanding that the E-Government is a continuous transformation that requires significant effort and time to implement, a framework has been developed that will be used to chart its path.

27. In line with the blueprint, the government is embarking on a new initiatives to offer a number of government services through a single gateway. The gateway will also provide access to strategic community portals, to provide citizens and businesses with information and services without having to navigate the government's vast machinery. Portals represent a progression from the current scenario of disparate agency websites.

28. These, and many other plans and initiatives, have but one goal - to implement our E-Government strategies that meet the needs of all our constituents, thereby improving their quality of life or environment in which we live, learn, work and play. As increased efficiency cuts cost of government, we may foresee more effective use of our tax dollars. E-Government offers the potential of two-way consultation and collaboration between the public and private sectors for a new level of accountability and responsiveness.

Closing

29. In closing, let me urge you to use this conference as a platform to engage the speakers; ask your

burning questions and challenge current practices and mindsets. Discuss new methodologies, always focusing on what citizens and customers need. On that note let me now declare this conference - The Government Leaders Conference 2003 open.

Thank you.

Wabillahi tawfiq walhidayah. Wassalamualaikum.