

# PM outlines initiatives for a winning work culture

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**KUALA LUMPUR, Fri.** — Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has outlined five initiatives to evolve a winning work culture among civil servants.

The Prime Minister said the current negative public perception of the civil service could be overcome if civil servants:

- initiated a positive change in mentality and attitude in striving for excellence;
- upheld high moral ethics;
- enhanced human resource development to create a knowledgeable and skilled manpower;
- promoted a performance-based work culture; and
- adopted good leadership principles.

Abdullah said although the civil service was among the best among developing countries, past achievements should not eclipse the weaknesses in the administration.

He said the public still had a negative image of the public sector even though measures had been taken to improve public services.

He said it was still considered bureaucratic, slow, unfriendly, unresponsive to the needs of the public, inefficient and unprofessional.

"This negative perception, although much influenced by prejudice, may also be a realistic assessment of the prevailing situation where many people have had unsatisfactory ex-

periences of poor service by government servants," he said.

Briefing senior government officers at the fifth public service premier gathering at the National Institute of Public Administration (Intan), which was also attended by Cabinet ministers for the first time, Abdullah expressed the need for political leaders to work closely with civil servants to prevent the erosion of confidence in the public service.

In his 40-minute speech, Abdullah re-emphasised the urgent need to curb corruption to prevent the loss of public confidence in the public service.

He said the public perception that the public service was tainted by corrupt practices in administration and law enforcement should be eliminated.

He said this negative perception, if not checked effectively, would not only affect the integrity and dignity of the public service but also have a ripple effect on the nation's economy and well-being.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak and Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Samsudin Osman were present.

Abdullah also held a 30-minute closed-door dialogue with the officers.

The Prime Minister said the public service could achieve a world-class standard if government officers and staff were determined and fully committed.

Civil servants, Abdullah said, must always remember that it was the

people who were the clients of the public service. This was why civil servants had to embrace high moral ethics and respond swiftly to abuses and malpractices.

Abdullah said that tax payers, in particular, had the right to quality public service besides wanting the public service to be transparent and efficiently managed.

"People now are more aware of their rights and the obligations of the Government. They are capable of comparing their experiences with developments in other countries and in the process are less tolerant of services that are not up to the mark," he said.

Such demands, he added, also came from foreign investors, local entrepreneurs and highly skilled workers who dealt with the civil service.

Abdullah said Malaysia used to compete with a smaller group of developing countries but now was competing with countries from every corner of the world.

"Efforts to develop Malaysia into a more competitive nation have become even more challenging and (with this) the public sector has a major role to play," he added.

In enhancing human resources development, the Prime Minister said current skills requirement should be taken into account when conducting courses.

"Public servants who are equipped with knowledge and skills will make the public service more relevant," he

said, adding that those who were indifferent towards the pursuit of knowledge would lag behind and become unproductive.

The Prime Minister also wanted to see government servants equipped with communication skills and a better command of English as these would help in dealings with the private sector and in negotiations and matters related to diplomacy.

Emphasis on positive work culture and environment, he said, could boost productivity.

He also wanted to see hardworking civil servants accorded recognition and rewarded regardless of age or gender.

"It is also important for senior administrators to identify and train those with potential to become heads of departments and public agencies."

Abdullah said that in appreciation of their service and as part of efforts to upgrade the quality of the public service, the salaries of civil servants had been increased by an average of 66 per cent since 1990.

He said salary adjustments had been made nine times since 1980, involving an expenditure of RM10.8 billion.

"Civil servants also received annual bonuses, special payments for performance and special financial assistance as many as 18 times between 1993 and last year," he said.

Such payments would continue to be given in tandem with the increase in productivity and quality of the public sector.