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# Towards a world-class delivery system

THE recent World Bank's Doing Business 2008 Report ranked Malaysia 24th in the world on the ease of doing business.

PEMUDAH, the task force comprising top civil servants and private sector officials formed to improve the business environment, hopes to move the country towards a higher ranking, perhaps a top 10 position by the end of this decade.

This will be done through a series of measures to improve existing procedures, regulations and existing laws.

Since its formation in February this year, PEMUDAH has taken the bull by the horns, so to speak, on a number of issues, a private sector member in its panel, Tan Sri G. Gnanalingam said.

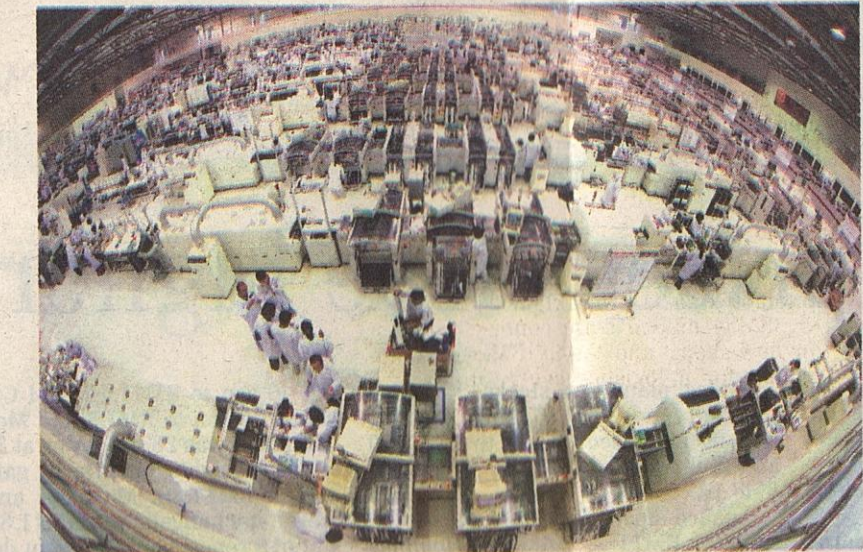
One of its first tasks, since it pertained to perception on how competitive Malaysia is and the ease of doing business in the country, was addressing the issue of expatriate work permits.

With the estimated 40,000 skilled expatriate workers who contribute significantly to the economic well-being of the country, PEMUDAH feel that it is high time that they be accorded better treatment to commensurate with their contributions.

"We took on the promise that we should not turn a blind eye to their problems. We believed that we should not adopt a lackadaisical attitude towards them and that they should make do with what we have in this country," Gnanalingam said.

He said where the government departments can improve, they should.


It used to take between four and five months for an employer to go through the process of hiring an expatriate. This was because of the multitude of application forms from various government departments and agencies and that long wait for approvals.



**SPEEDY DELIVERY:** The Business Licensing Electronic Support Services will initially cover the manufacturing sector to address urgent needs. — Bloomberg picture

The Immigration Department has now put in place a system to process and approve everything connected to expatriate work permits within 10 working days.

On top of that, one-stop application centres have also been established at Immigration offices. In addition to speeding up the processing time for expatriate work permits, the tenure of work permits has been extended from the present three years to five or 10 years to provide for greater continuity. And business travel visas, previously limited to three months, have now been extended to six months.



**PEMUDAH**  
Pasukan Petugas Khas Pemudahcara Perniagaan  
The Special Taskforce To Facilitate Business

Another red-tape cutting initiative proposed by PEMUDAH was the establishment of a "Business Licensing Electronic Support Services" (BLESS) system to be rolled out in stages anytime now. BLESS will serve as the single online channel aimed at streamlining the process of business licence ap-

plications. BLESS will cover the manufacturing sector initially to address the urgent needs of the sector concerned. It will subsequently cover other sectors.

It will take a while before Malaysia can reach the top 10 ranking of the World Bank's Doing Business list but at least the gov-

ernment is doing something about its ranking.

"We are pulling up our socks and doing something concrete to correct the misperception that it is difficult to do business in Malaysia," Gnanalingam said.

In the meantime, PEMUDAH will continue to simplify and speed up application procedures in a number of key areas to attract more foreign and local investment.

"Despite the fact that we had been in existence for less than a year, we have taken many bold initiatives to eliminate many old and cumbersome procedures that had been with us for decades and which had in fact been hampering the smooth running of business and giving our delivery system a bad name," he added.

Credit goes to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi for his resoluteness in wanting to eliminate bureaucracy. It's one thing to speak about wanting to eliminate red tape or that red tape should be eliminated.

"The PM has "walked the talk". And he has a new team led by the chief secretary to the government, Tan Sri Mohd Sidek Hassan, to see that the bold initiatives are implemented. Eliminating bureaucracy also translates into eliminating corruption, and hence reducing the cost of doing business and frustrations in the process," Gnanalingam said.