

A service that serves

CHANGING FOR THE BETTER: Experience shows the Government Transformation Programme is indeed working

A COUPLE of years ago, I was reminded about the importance of keeping the named beneficiary of my retirement fund up-to-date. Realising that it was not, I decided to pay the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) headquarters a visit.

Ingrained with the widespread view of what dealing with a government agency would be like, I was prepared for the worst. Determined to be early at the counter and anticipating a long wait, I left the house very early and was extremely glad to find a parking space across the road where the EPF headquarters is. But, my heart sank when I noticed that while it was just opened for business that day, there was already a sizeable crowd sitting in the waiting area.

But, I had hardly warmed the seat when my number was called, then attended to by a courteous lady who was very quick and focused on her work, and was out of the place within just 10 minutes. I was pleasantly surprised that I even had time for a simple breakfast and still made it to the office well before 10am.

related how quick it has been for them to make withdrawals and how simple such processes are today.

Not too long after the pleasant surprise at the EPF, my passport came up for renewal. Again, I was filled with much anxiety, following the mostly difficult times I have had in previous years at the Immigration Department. I would have to compete not only with others who were there for similar purposes, but also with touts who somehow will always find ways to cut the queue. At least once, I got to the Immigration office only to be told that the quota for numbers was finished and I had to try again another day.

So, this time, not only did I start from home very early, I even applied for leave, anticipating that I would have to wait for the document for much of the day.

There was already a long queue when I got to the Immigration office in Kajang, and once I had obtained my number, I managed to get a seat. But, it was in under-20 minutes that my number was flashed on the electronic board, and after all the document-checking was done, the officer told me that my passport would be ready in 30 minutes' time.

After collecting the passport, I noticed that it wasn't even nine in the morning. I went to the office, cancelled my leave, and proceeded to work as

long periods of time, again often competing with touts, before being able to perform the task. Not any more. These days, I just purchase my insurance cover from any insurance company and proceed to any post office to pay for the road tax and vehicle permit.

The three agencies that conduct much of their business with the public have demonstrated positive results from their willingness to change. I was made to understand that when the EPF started its change management years ago, the retirement fund benchmarked its service against that provided by commercial banks.

One of its first objectives then was to ensure customers do not have to wait long before being attended to. Apart from making available many more service counters at its headquarters and branches, the EPF also introduced shifts to ensure such counters were manned even during lunch hour.

The Internet, meanwhile, has also helped tremendously in the public's dealings with government departments and agencies. Almost all that conduct dealings with the public now offer online transaction facilities, including the traditionally dreaded Inland Revenue Board. Today, if you are always on time with your income declarations and tax payments online, you will probably never have to visit the IRB office again for the rest of your life.

The Government Transformation Programme is indeed working, and the initial success of all these

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**MUSTAPHA
KAMIL**

I was wrong in my initial views towards the EPF. Indeed, it has changed drastically for the better since the last time I dealt with it several years ago.

It would not be too much for me to say that the service accorded by the EPF today either matches or perhaps even surpasses those provided by some commercial banks. Friends have

usually another visit to a government department which I always detested in the past was to the Road Transport Department (RTD) for payment of my car's road tax and renewal of its permit.

In the past, I usually had to take leave from work to do so. I would have to be at the RTD office early, stand in line for

the civil servants of all ranks who have made this change possible should be proud of themselves. But, it must not end here. The civil service must continue to improve and set even higher goals.

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People waiting for their turn at the **Immigration Department** in Putrajaya.