

SECTION 7 IMPROVING POLICY-MAKING

7.1 Enhancing policy analysis

7.2 Enhancing policy co-ordination

7.3 Improving policy presentation

7.1 Enhancing policy analysis

This entry focuses on policy analysis contributing to the National Development Policy.

At the national level, policy analysis and evaluation is done by the Economic Planning Unit of the Prime Minister's Department. The Macro and Evaluation Division of this Unit evaluates the impact of government policies on the quality of life and on the economy.

The Implementation and Co-ordination Unit of the Prime Minister's Department monitors the implementation of programme components. This Unit is the secretariat to the National Development Council (NDC) whose functions are:

- to ensure that the implementation of government policies and strategies are in line with the objectives of the National Development Policy and the Sixth Malaysia Plan;
- to monitor and evaluate the implementation strategies of programmes and projects under the National Development Policy and the Sixth Malaysia Plan. The NDC is assisted by the National Development Working Committee.

To do an effective programme and project analysis and evaluation, information is vital to check progress. The Unit has established a computerised and integrated information system to capture and monitor all programmes and projects in terms of its physical (SIAP information system) and financial (SETIA information system) progress. The SIAP information system is outlined in the Development Administration Circular No. 5, 1991 on Guidelines On The Integrated Scheduling System. This Unit is the central repository of this information. The feeders to this information system are the various implementing government departments. This information system is updated every three months.

The Government has introduced the following guidelines to assist implementing agencies to improve the planning of development projects:

Development Administration Circular No.2, 1992 on Guidelines on the Planning and Preparation of Development Projects: this guideline introduces a systematic method of project identification, preparation, implementation and evaluation to provide feedback to policy-makers;

- Compendium of Development Circulars: a compilation of relevant circulars relating to procedures and systems on planning and implementation of projects are compiled, updated and indexed for easy reference by implementing agencies;
- Guidelines on the Implementation of Directive No. 1, Machinery For the Implementation Co-ordination of the National Development Policy: these guidelines explain the functions of the administrative machinery established at the federal, state and district levels in co-ordinating and evaluating programme components and projects.

The Guidelines on the Implementation of Directive No. 1 of 1991 Machinery for Implementation Co-ordination of the National Development Policy outline the cascading mechanism for co-ordinating and evaluating the implementation of the National Development Policy as follows:

- a. National Development Council (national level);
- b. The National Development Working Committee – assists the National Development Council;
- c. The Ministry Development Committee – is formed at ministry level to monitor and evaluate its projects;
- d. The State Development Council undertakes the same function as the Ministry Development Committee, but at state level. This Council is assisted by the State Development Working Committee;
- e. District Development Committee – formed at district level.

An integrated information system monitoring the financial and physical aspect of project implementation is established to support the decision-making process.

Supporting material

- (i) The Civil Service of Malaysia – A Paradigm Shift Chapter 10 (pp 655 - 656) and Chapter 15
- (ii) Improvement and Development in the Public Service 1992, Chapter 10
- (iii) Guidelines on the Implementation of Directive No. 1, 1991, Mechanism For Co-ordinating The Implementation of the National Development Policy (in the national language)

- (iv) Development Administration Circular No.5, 1991, Integrated Scheduling System
- (v) Development Administration Circular No.2, 1992, Guidelines on the Planning and Preparation of Development Projects
- (vi) Functions of the Economic Planning Unit of the Prime Minister's Department
- (vii) Functions of the Implementation and Co-ordination Unit of the Prime Minister's Department

7.2 Enhancing policy co-ordination

The Cabinet Division of the Prime Minister's Department functions as a secretariat to the Cabinet which considers and endorses government policies. In practice, any new policy is initiated by the respective minister. A Cabinet paper containing the rationale and need for a policy will be prepared by the ministry. This paper is then circulated to the various concerned ministries and departments for comments. These written comments are incorporated into the Cabinet paper prepared by the ministry and sent to the Cabinet Division. The Cabinet Division will prepare appropriate copies for circulation at the Cabinet meeting for deliberation. Once it is endorsed, it will become a new policy.

From time to time, the Cabinet may set up Cabinet Committees to be headed by the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister or the Minister concerned. These Cabinet Committees deal with various matters such as investment, land, public employees' salaries and service conditions. The secretariat to these Committees is the ministry responsible for the portfolio for which the Cabinet Committee is set up.

This procedure is to ensure that all possible departmental views are considered before a policy is endorsed.

7.3 Improving policy presentation

Policy presentation and exchange of information between the Government and the public falls into two categories:

- inter-personal communication: Information Officers from the Department of Information go out in the field to explain various government policies and programmes. The communication media used are exhibitions, film shows, lectures, household visits, dialogue sessions etc.;
- mass communication: mass communication is done through radio, television and the press. The Public Relations Officers in ministries and departments ensure that all official information and the activities of the ministries are adequately covered by the mass media.

While the use of mass media has been effective in giving publicity, announcing new policies, creating awareness and providing information, inter-personal communication has been effective not only in finding out what the people think (public opinion) and desire but also in getting them to accept new ideas and methods and to participate in development projects that are being carried out for their benefit.

Policies and official information must be well presented to the public to ensure better public understanding and receptivity and because the citizen has a right to public information.

As the Ministry of Information is generally responsible for policy presentation, Public Relations Officers from the Department of Information under the ministry are stationed in various ministries and departments to ensure that official news and information are released through:

- press releases;
- press conferences;
- ministerial interviews;
- senior officers' interviews;
- special launchings.

Public Relations Officers must be well trained to handle press materials. A close rapport has to be established with the press.

Supporting material

- (i) Booklet on the Department of Information (in the national language)
- (ii) Discussion with officials of the Department of Information