

ENDING THE LONG WAIT

Reforms have cut process time to minutes from months and saved billions, says productivity corp

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THE application and documentation process at government counters, which used to take months or even years, can now be completed within days or even minutes under the Bureaucratic Red Tape Reform (RKB) initiative.

The Malaysia Productivity Corporation (MPC) said the initiative is reshaping government service delivery.

Its deputy director-general, Dr Mazrina Mohamed Ibramsah, said the impact of RKB since its rollout last year had been “clear and measurable”.

“To date, 1,007 projects (under RKB) have been registered across all ministries, state governments and local authorities. The objective is simple — to reduce red tape,

speed up service delivery and make dealings easier for the public and businesses,” she told the *New Sunday Times*.

Up to Dec 2, MPC has guided 323 projects to completion, generating RM2.01-billion in compliance cost savings.

The savings, she said, were achieved through hands-on implementation support on the ground, rather than policy changes on paper alone.

Among the most striking examples is the Kulai Fast Lane initiative by the Kulai Municipal Council, which has cut the approval period for operating permits from 24 months to 14 months.

The initiative speeds up the process of obtaining physical development applications by expediting the approval process for construction permits, such as the Certificate of Completion and Compliance, as well as operating licences for foreign



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investors by reducing bureaucratic red tape.

At the Customs Department, the SMARTGPB initiative reduced processing time from three days to just one minute, while system integration slashed the expatriate pass approval process from 87 days to five days.

“These are not marginal improvements. They fundamentally change how businesses plan, invest and operate.”

Mazrina said the reforms were also reflected in Malaysia’s standing on the global stage.

After the RKB was implemented, the country climbed 11 places to 23rd in the IMD World Competitiveness Ranking 2025, while the bureaucracy indicator improved by 12 positions to 14th place.

A key enabler of this improvement is the use of artificial intelligence (AI), which has helped multiple

agencies cope with high application volumes despite their limited manpower by automating checks and streamlining workflows.

“Often, delays happen because there are too many applications but insufficient staff. Instead of checking applications one by one, AI allows verification to be done automatically. This reduces workload, shortens processing time and keeps costs low.”

With the lower costs, she added, agencies would not need to raise fees or licence charges.

For the public, she said, the difference was becoming increasingly tangible.

“Processes that once relied on physical letters moving from one department to another are now handled online, with supervisors able to review these applications in real time.”

Looking ahead, MPC plans to further strengthen RKB by introducing a uniform Key Performance Indicator scorecard across ministries, states

and agencies, supported by data-driven monitoring and evaluation.

The aim is not only to expand successful reforms, but to embed a culture of continuous improvement within the public sector.

Another focus will be on narrowing implementation gaps between states and regions through a whole-of-government approach, ensuring reforms are applied consistently nationwide.

“Many say the government’s workload is heavy, that is true, but by reviewing regulations, reducing unnecessary procedures — from 10 steps to three — and using technology wisely, we can ease that burden on civil servants while removing obstacles for the public and industry.”

In the long run, she added, success would not be measured solely by rankings or cost savings, but by something more basic: when Malaysians feel that dealing with the government is no longer a test of patience, but a process that works.



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