

# Malaysia's public service has some catching up to do

Among top performers in region but falls short relative to advanced economies

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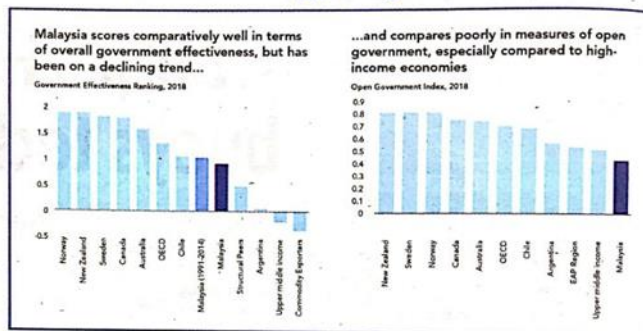
**PUTRAJAYA:** While Malaysia's public service performs well by regional standards, it falls short relative to advanced economies, particularly in terms of openness and transparency.

According to the 20th Malaysia Economic Monitor, which includes a special focus on re-energising the public service, Malaysia's performance has been largely stagnant and falls short relative to high-income aspirational comparators.

"As Malaysia aspires to be a high income economy by 2024, East Asia Pacific will no longer be the right competitor for Malaysia. You need to be compared to high income economies like OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development). When you compare Malaysia's performance with OECD-like countries, there are still some gaps that Malaysia needs to fill," said World Bank lead public sector specialist Rajni Bajpai.

Malaysia is one of the top performers in the region according to the World Bank's Doing Business index, but its performance on the Government Effectiveness indicator has remained stagnant or fallen in recent years.

The report said Malaysia's index for voice and accountability is well below what would be expected, given its level of per-capita income, and some indicators like political



Warwick



Rajni

stability and the rule of law have worsened over time, with a widening gap with OECD comparators.

Malaysia fares poorly in terms of citizen perceptions related to equal treatment in public sector employment and ranks below regional and OECD comparators in terms of the impartiality of its public administration. However, it has done well on measures related

to gender equality, with women constituting nearly 50% of employees in the public service.

World Bank country director for Brunei, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand Mara Warwick said there is a well-established connection between the quality of state institutions and economic growth. With increased affluence, societal expectations regarding the range and quality of services delivered by

the state also tend to grow. Therefore, enhancing the effectiveness of state institutions is an integral part of a successful transition to a higher level of economic and social development.

"The focus now until the 12th Malaysia Plan is about making the public sector future-ready for Malaysia. It's important for Malaysia to put in place the foundations now of an effective public sector that will be able to carry forward and the government's priorities on building the public sector further and on transparency and accountability are important," said Warwick.

For the public service to fully realise its potential, Malaysia will need to invest in human resources management; to encourage and develop a more open, transparent environment; to undertake reforms to attract, manage and retain the best talent, and to embrace new and emerging trends, including those related to rapidly-evolving technological innovations and digitalisation.