

07/04/2016 - KSN Annual Lecture "Merakyatkan Perkhidmatan Awam :Prioritising The People"

Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh, Good Morning and Salam 1Malaysia.

Yang Berhormat Tan Sri Datuk Amar Haji Mohamad Morshidi bin Abdul Ghani,
Sarawak State Secretary;

Yang Berbahagia Datuk Md. Yahaya bin Basimin,
Sarawak Federal Secretary;

Yang Berusaha Dr. Hamidin bin Abdul Hamid,
Chief Executive Officer, Razak School of Government;

Yang Berbahagia Dato' Dr. Mazlan Yusoff,
Director of INTAN;

Heads of Federal and State Agencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

OPENING REMARKS

1. I am honoured to have been invited to deliver a lecture at this second instalment of the **Razak School of Government's KSN Annual Lecture**. I must commend RSOG for organising this platform for sharing, and I thank the National Institute of Public Administration (INTAN), Jabatan Ketua Menteri Sarawak, and the Centre of Modern Management Sarawak as collaborators in organising this event.

2. I feel particularly fortunate to be here in Kota Samarahan this morning as this is the first time that I am delivering a lecture to public servants in INTAN Sarawak. The last time I spoke to a large gathering of state and federal civil servants was in Kuching on 25 November 2014 during the Sarawak Public Sector Conference, held in conjunction with the Civil Service Day 2014 celebrations.

3. In 2014, I spoke about transformation, the necessity for us in the public service to transform or risk being left behind, and on achieving service excellence through a competent workforce. Today, I shall be speaking on a topic directly related to the public service, that is "**Merakyatkan Perkhidmatan Awam: Prioritising the People**". This topic is very close to my heart, and I hope it will elicit some personal reflections and propositions on your side.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

4. Before I begin, it would be remiss of me to not highlight some of the uniqueness of the state of Sarawak, which makes her very distinct from the rest of Malaysia. For one, alongside the major ethnic groups, Sarawak has more than forty sub-ethnic groups, making it the state with the most diversity within its boundaries. This is given significant recognition in the Federal Constitution, whereby several safeguards have been written to protect the interests of the people of Sarawak, as well as those in Sabah. Despite its multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-lingual composition, Sarawakians live together in harmony through the practice of tolerance, peace and acceptance.

5. Where the State Civil Service is concerned, Sarawak has performed very well. It is recognised as among the most dynamic in the country, receiving awards and accolades for innovation, complaints management and digital inclusion, among others. Its financial affairs have also consistently received unequivocal validations of a clean bill of health by the Auditor-General of Malaysia. I must congratulate the Sarawak Civil Service on these achievements. Looking at the Sarawak model, there is clearly a lot for the other states and the federal service to emulate.

6. Also, as Sarawak is the largest state in Malaysia with a population that is not only diverse but spread out geographically, this poses an additional challenge to public servants in bringing services to the *rakyat*. Hence, it is of utmost importance for all of us here as public servants to truly understand and embody the spirit behind *Merakyatkan Perkhidmatan Awam*.

MERAKYATKAN PERKHIDMATAN AWAM

7. I introduced the concept of *Merakyatkan Perkhidmatan Awam* or Humanising the Public Service in 2012, as a reminder of the need to restore the culture of people-centricity in the public service. It is premised on something that is very simple and apparent: **priority on the people, and that we as public servants being a part of the citizenry, must provide the best service to the rakyat**, the same excellent service that we would expect as a member of the public.

8. To recap, there are 6 elements under *Merakyatkan Perkhidmatan Awam* which are not difficult to demonstrate in the course of fulfilling our duties as civil servants. Firstly, having **openness** or *keterbukaan* in our dealings with people, and secondly, having constant **engagement** or *musyawarah* with our clients and stakeholders. Third, be pro-active to **turun padang** and meet the people on the ground to observe and obtain direct feedback. The fourth and fifth elements deal with the need for public servants to **possess a balance between the physical and spiritual** *orinsaniah*, and have a **sense of belonging to the public service**, or *kekitaan*. Last but not least, to **prioritise collaboration and partnerships with the private sector and NGOs**, where ever possible.

9. It is however unfortunate that there are still segments of the public service that are unable to fully understand this concept. While there are many public servants who go the extra mile to provide services to the *rakyat*, there are still those who are unable to rise to the occasion. As public servants, we have a huge responsibility to dispense our duties with the highest level of integrity, trustworthiness and excellence. To borrow the words of Walter Reuther, an American Labour Union leader: “*There is no greater calling than to serve your fellow men. There is no greater contribution than to help the weak. **There is no greater satisfaction than to have done it well.**” So yes, ladies and gentlemen, **we must do our job well at all times, with the people as our priority.***

PRIORITISING THE PEOPLE: PEOPLE ECONOMY AND CAPITAL ECONOMY

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

10. There are many examples where the Government has steadfastly prioritised the people in the pursuit towards becoming a high-income developed nation in 2020. For instance, in the **2015 Budget**, the theme chosen was “People Economy” and it was the first time that we were introduced to the concept of “people economy”. We are generally more used to “**capital economy**”, which refers to economic management and policies from the macro perspective; for example, based on capital, GDP growth, per capita income, private investment and the capital market. However, “**people economy**” refers to **an economy that is rakyat-oriented**, covering priorities and interests of the *rakyat* such as cost of living, household income, education opportunities, employment and business, quality of life, and security and safety. In short, it is an **economy based on the daily lives of the rakyat**.

11. While the 2015 Budget strove to find a balance between the “capital economy” and the “people economy”, the **Eleventh Malaysia Plan** (11MP) unveiled in May 2015 reaffirmed the Government’s commitment to the *rakyat*. The theme “**Anchoring Growth on People**” emphasised that our nation’s growth cannot be measured by economic success alone. Once again, **putting priority on the people was evident**, with six strategic thrusts driving the 11MP from 2016 to 2020, which include **enhancing inclusiveness towards an equitable society** (strategic thrust 1) and **improving well-being for all** (strategic thrust 2).

12. The **2016 Budget** tabled in October 2015 also echoed the same priority to the people, this time with the theme “**Prospering the Rakyat**”, with **four measures identified specifically to ease the cost of living of the rakyat**. Even with the re-calibration and re-structuring of the 2016 Budget on 28 January 2016 due to the challenges of the global economic environment, the 11 measures introduced **did not compromise the programmes for the rakyat**. Instead, the recalibration ensured the economy remained on a strong growth trajectory, and the welfare and well-being of the *rakyat* are protected and safeguarded.

PUBLIC SERVANTS: PRIORITISING THE PEOPLE THROUGH NBOS

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

13. I hope that from what I have highlighted so far, you can see for yourself that putting the *rakyat* first is the Government's priority. So how does this relate to you as a public servant, you may ask? Needless to say, the many plans, programmes and initiatives that are written in detail in all these national documents **will not come to fruition if not for the commitment of public servants to implement them**, and ensure that they achieve their aims and objectives. **Your role has never been more important as we race towards 2020.**

14. In actual fact, public servants have time and time again, demonstrated immense creativity and dedication in putting words into action, humanising the public service and putting the people first. Case in point: the success of **Urban Transformation Centres** (UTCs). As you are aware, UTCs are centres housing a multitude of Government agencies and public amenities which open beyond the conventional working hours of Government agencies. Open 7 days a week, from 8.00 a.m. to 9.00 p.m., UTCs would not be a success in serving the people if not for the public servants who have risen to the challenge to work in shifts beyond the norm.

15. There are currently 14 UTCs in operation all over Malaysia, and so popular and successful are these UTCs that 2.2 million customers were served between January to February 2016 alone. Sarawak herself boasts 3 UTCs: one in Kuching, established in October 2014; one in Sibul, which began operations on 14 March 2016; and one in Miri, which began operations on 16 March 2016 and was officially opened by Yang Amat Berhormat Dato' Sri Mohd. Najib bin Tun Hj. Abdul Razak, Prime Minister of Malaysia last Saturday.

16. The UTC is but one of many initiatives introduced through the National Blue Ocean Strategy (NBOS), where low cost, high impact and rapidly executed programmes for the *rakyat* is of central focus. **NBOS began in 2009 with 10 initiatives**, and has now grown to 89 initiatives involving over 80 ministries and agencies.

17. Another initiative under NBOS which I would like to showcase is the **Mobile Community Transformation Centres**. Mobile CTCs bring key Government services to communities, apart

from providing information and awareness on Government policies, programmes and activities to the people. Undoubtedly, to execute the Mobile CTC programmes in Sarawak is very challenging due to logistical considerations, but once again, I am proud that **public servants here are able to work together** and provide much-needed Government services to the *rakyat*. From January to March this year, 12 Mobile CTC programmes with visitors totalling more than 350,000 were held nation-wide. Of this, six Mobile CTC programmes were held in Sarawak: in Miri, Sibul, Sarikei, Saratok, Kapit and Padawan.

18. In fact, Sarawak has embraced the spirit of NBOS by being the first state to establish its own **NBOS Sarawak Committee**, co-chaired by the State Secretary and Federal Secretary in coming up with new initiatives for the benefit of the people of Sarawak. NBOS Sarawak initiatives in the pipeline include the recently announced **MaGIC Social Enterprise Creative Hub** in Bintawa, Kuching, the first creative and cultural entrepreneurship hub of its kind in the region, to be housed in former JKR warehouses. Also in the works is the **Sarawak Alternative Rural Electrification Scheme** (SARES), which will bring electricity supply to at least 323 villages in rural and very rural areas in Sarawak.

19. Indeed, the role of public servants is now enhanced, and enriched, particularly when our actions directly touch the *rakyat* where it matters most. Public servants in the Sarawak civil service also have increased responsibilities now, with 13 provisions of administrative empowerment already delegated from the Federal Government to the State Government. I have full confidence that public servants involved in this exercise will be able to discharge these new responsibilities with utmost dedication and diligence.

TRANSFORMING STRUCTURE AND PROCESSES

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

20. As we move along this journey in public service, let us be more efficient and effective in providing the best services to the people, and to be more resilient in the face of external strains

and uncertainties. Let us take pro-active steps to transform for the betterment of our service. I feel that there are two forms for transformation that need to be done here:

(i) Firstly, **transforming our processes**, to modernise or improve the performance of administrative systems, to address persistent underlying inefficiencies as well as respond to external changes such as the digitalisation of media; and

(ii) Secondly, **focusing on structure**, which runs deeper; that is to re-evaluate our organisational composition, including people and component agencies in order to be leaner, more agile, networked and performance-driven.

21. We must transform these two things without **compromising productivity and efficiency of the public service**, nor the **benefits to the rakyat**. Even if we face the pressing need to tighten our belts, there is always room for creative and innovative solutions. For instance, under the re-calibrated 2016 Budget, the Government is expected to realise savings of RM4 billion across the operations of the 24 ministries and a further RM5 billion reduction in development expenditure. This puts us in creative problem-solving mode – **to make difficult decisions on what to cut, what to reduce and how to continue to deliver the services that the people expect but with lower spending**. There can be neither room nor tolerance for extravagance, mismanagement or wastage.

22. Hence, what I would like to advocate is that in the face of present challenges, let us not respond with pessimism but with added dynamism. Let us leverage on every resource that we have to deliver the highest possible levels of service, in the most efficient way possible, and at a fraction of the cost that we are accustomed to operating at. **Let us continue to priorities the people and truly illustrate what “low cost, high impact and rapid execution” means.**

CLOSING REMARKS

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

23. Once again, allow me to thank the organiser and collaborators for this opportunity to be with you in INTAN Sarawak this morning. Before I end, let me leave you with the following quote from President Woodrow Wilson during his first term in the White House:

“Do you covet honor? You will never get it by serving yourself. Do you covet distinction? You will get it only as the servant of mankind. Do not forget, then, why you are here. You are not here merely to prepare to make a living. You are here in order to enable the world to live more amply, with greater vision, with a finer spirit of hope and achievement. You are here to enrich the world, and you impoverish yourself if you forget the errand”(Unquote).

24. I hope you will reflect upon these words and I hope that they ring true for you as public servants. **May we never lose sight of our goals, our intentions and our duty in the service for the people.**

Thank you. Wabillahi taufik walhidayah Wassalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh.

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