

Penyampai : TAN SRI ABDUL HALIM ALI
Tajuk : MAJLIS PERASMIAN EXECUTIVE ROUNDTABLE - INTAN (ERTI) SIRI 1, BIL. 1/99
Lokasi : DEWAN SRI BAIDURI, INTAN BUKIT KIARA KUALA LUMPUR
Tarikh : 22-07-1999

Yang Berbahagia Dr. Zulkarnain bin Haji Awang Pengarah INTAN Tan Sri-Tan Sri, Dato'-dato', Tuan-tuan dan puan-puan sekalian.

Assalamualikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh dan Selamat Sejahtera

Terlebih dahulu saya mengucapkan ribuan terima kasih kepada INTAN kerana sudi menjemput saya pada hari ini untuk merasmikan Sesi Pertama "Executive Roundtable - INTAN (ERTI). Saya juga ingin mengucapkan tahniah kepada INTAN yang telah mengambil inisiatif untuk menganjurkan sesi "Roundtable" ini dengan tujuan mengeratkan hubungan dan kerjasama di antara pemimpin-pemimpin pelbagai sektor di samping membincangkan dalam suasana yang kurang formal isu-isu penting yang berkaitan dengan masa depan negara. Di samping itu cadangan dan saraan yang bakal dihasilkan dari sesi ERTI ini dapat dikemukakan kepada pihak-pihak tertentu bagi dipertimbangkan sewajarnya.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

2. The main theme for today's roundtable discussion is "The Changing Patterns of Governance". I would like to begin by examining the meaning of "governance". The Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary of the English Language, defines "governance" as "control or authority". Whereas, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) defines "governance" as the manner in which power is exercised by the governments in the management of a country's social and economic resources. A more comprehensive definition is provided by UNDP, which defines "governance" as "the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels". Therefore "governance" comprises the structures, mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and group articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations, provide their contributions and mediate their differences.

3. Our focus today is the search for better, effective or good governance. History has provided us many pointers and lessons if we care enough to ponder and learn from the present and past experience of our own country as well as others. We see emerging trends that cannot be ignored. Nevertheless, in our search for universal principles, we must remember that each country must find its own model, based on its unique history culture values and the stage of development and civilisation.

4. 'Democracy' has clearly emerged as the universally preferred system of governance. The significance of the democratic system is the existence of an elected government, which is given the legitimacy and authority to formulate the policies and laws as well as to manage and administer the state on behalf and for the people.

The elected political leaders that form the government of the day, come from the political party or a coalition of political parties that command the majority of the votes in the national election. The system of political parties, as such, is the basic political foundation of the democratic system. The main role of government is to serve the people and to protect and uphold public and national interest. The government is responsible and accountable to parliament and finally to the people through the process of political representation and national election. This is the system adopted by Malaysia and has served the country well over the past 42 years of its independent existence.

5. Effective or good governance therefore depends very much on the quality of the political leadership that constitutes and forms the government. The nation and the citizenry benefit when we have a political leadership that has a clear vision and possesses sound strategies for sustainable national growth and development. In Malaysia for instance, the government has formulated the Rukunegara, the New Economic Policy, the New Development Policy and Vision 2020. It have formulated and implemented seven five-year development plans. In 1998, in the wake of the economic and financial crisis, the

government launched a National Economic Recovery Plan.

6. Good governance however is judged not only from the standpoint of declared vision, plans or election manifestos. What is more important perhaps is the translation of the plan to reality. What distinguishes the successful political leadership from others is their knowledge, skill and ability to implement the plans and in the performance of day-to-day operations of critical government functions. Successful political leadership or government must envelope the qualities of courage, the strong commitment and will to implement and achieve the vision and plans. It must also possess the will to lead, to be in charge, and have the courage to make necessary change and reforms. Sometimes, it has to take unpopular decisions. This task is by no means simple and straightforward. History has shown us that programs of development and reform, are often confronted by resistance to change and dynamic conservatism. There is however a downside to a strong and determined leadership often times, decisive decision are seen as authoritarian or even dictatorial, providing the opportunity for opponents of the government, within and outside the country, to malign if not undermine the country's growth and development. Government often have to strike a fine balance between firm action in implementing its policies meant for public good and public acceptance of such action.

Ladies and Gentlemen

7. We have also learnt from our own experience and from others that good governance greatly depends on the existence of a strong trusting and stable relationship between elected and appointed leadership, i.e. between the political leaders in the government and the leaders and members of the civil service.

Strong collaboration and partnership between political leadership and the civil service is paramount in the implementation of Government policies and programs. The nation needs a clean, efficient, capable and trustworthy civil service. Any significant plan and effort towards good governance must also focus on the role and quality of the civil service. This is because the civil service is the primary institution responsible for implementing national development plans, public policies and for administering the laws and regulations of the country. The civil service is required to deliver essential services to the community, as well as to protect and promote public and national interests. During difficult times and in periods of crisis, the nation depends on the civil service to assist in solving the problems that arise and to alleviate and find resolution to the crisis. It is thus important that we continue to move and sustain the efforts to improve and enhance the quality of the civil service. The objective is to internalise and institutionalise a culture of excellence in the civil service, to build a public service that uphold ethical principles and values. Such principles and values include loyalty, neutrality and impartiality, professionalism, quality service, citizen-friendly, customer-oriented, responsible, accountable, honest and demonstrating unquestioned integrity. It is therefore important to review, improve and reengineer the work systems and procedure, as well to upgrade the technology used. Another important agenda is the program to enhance and update the knowledge and skill of the members of the civil service; particularly to enable them to keep pace with the rapid changes in the global environment, including the IT revolution.

Ladies and Gentlemen

8. Another topic that require deeper examination and analysis is the choice of the institutional machinery or framework of governance. Generally, we can divide the players in the governance process into three broad categories: (i) the governmental sector, (ii) the private sector and (iii) the third sector. The governmental sector includes the legislature, the judiciary and the executive branches of the government as well as the public and the uniformed services, The private sector includes small, medium and large financial/businesses institutions, both local and international. Whereas the third sector, sometimes also referred to as "the civil society", comprises community-based, issue-based, interest-based as well as other non-governmental organizations.

9. During the early decades of our independence, the governmental sector played a dominant role in leading the process of nation building. The public sector was regarded as the main "engine of growth" for socioeconomic development. This was expected of the public sector since our private sector was not that developed yet. However, in the 1980s, with a more vibrant private sector, the focus was on the role of the

private sector as the "engine of growth". Under the "Privatization Policy" and the "Malaysian Incorporated Policy" for instance, emphasis was given to enhancing public-private sector collaboration in bringing about national socioeconomic development. Being the "engine of growth", the private sector began to play a more active role in the governance process and in propelling the country towards developed status. The role of the public service becomes increasingly focussed on facilitating and regulating the private sector.

10. During these two periods, the role played by the third sector in the governance process was at best marginal. However, lately, there is a growing recognition both at international and national levels that the third sector can contribute positively towards nation building and national development. In fact, in several developed as well as developing countries, the third sector plays a crucial role in bringing about a better quality of life to those disadvantaged groups living at the fringe of society. In some other countries, perhaps due to the weaknesses in their public service, the third sector bears the primary responsibility for delivering public goods and services, such as health care and education that governments no longer manage. In fact, large amount of funds from international bodies, charitable organizations and foundations are now channeled through the third sector.

11. In the era of globalization, it is not possible for us to ignore this emerging trend nor completely isolate ourselves from its effects. International bodies and foundations may prefer to provide financial and non-financial aids directly to third sector organization rather than through governments. In fact, according to CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, NGOs deliver more official development assistance than the entire UN system (excluding the World Bank). Information on third sector organizations is widely available through the "net". Likewise, success stories on how public, private and third sector collaborations can bring about a better quality of life to local communities are also widely available through the "net". Therefore, as a result of globalization, people are not only becoming more aware of the alternatives available to them. They are also becoming more vocal in their demands and are more willing to bring matters to be decided by the courts. Furthermore, they also have the ability to garner enough internal and external support to advance their cause. Therefore, leaders in both the private and public sectors need to examine this emerging trend closely and see how best we ensure that it will contribute positively towards a sustainable national development.

12. It would be difficult for the Civil Service not to take notice of this emerging third sector. In fact, it should take advantage of this development and rethink as to how best it can incorporate this emerging trend to help transform Malaysia into developed nation as envisaged by vision 2020. Today we are living in a rapidly changing and highly unpredictable environment. To be effective in such a highly dynamic and turbulent environment, we need more flexible and adaptable organizations rather than rigid bureaucracies. Therefore, it may not be surprising to see the emergence of inter-organizational networks among the third sector organizations to complement the existing public sector organizations. Furthermore, governance in the new millennium may involve bringing together representatives from the various sectors in the designing, planning, implementing, as well as monitoring programs and projects aimed at enhancing the living standards of the population. Under such circumstances, a greater degree of collaborative approach with the third sector may be needed.

Therefore, governance in the new millennium needs leaders who are skillful in initiating and facilitating such collaborations in order to create a win/win situation for the public, private and third sectors. We need to develop new organizational strategies that take into account this new development. We also need to create the appropriate work culture and ethics as well as opportunities that could stimulate and facilitate such inter-sector collaborations. If we agree that the public, private and third sectors are going to be important players in future governance, then we also need to determine what would be the roles and responsibilities of each sector in the governance process.

13. If we want to ensure effective and meaningful participation of the third sector, a number of issues need to be resolved and laid down. Firstly, what are the necessary ground rules that are necessary to ensure that it gives maximum benefits to the public and the nation. Second, how do we empower the NGOs, and interest groups to enable them function professionally with efficiency and full accountability. This requires the development of ground rules, administrative and organizational ethics to ensure that the

public interest is paramount. These ground rules must take into account local peculiarities, and respect for domestic cultural and traditional values. Wholesale adoption of foreign standards is certainly not acceptable. All participating parties must be sincere and true in their objective of improving the quality of life of all Malaysians. This collaborative participation is only achievable if the relationships among the three participating sectors in future governance are guided by strong moral and ethical values. In fact, I would go as far as to say that strong moral and ethical values is the very foundation for ensuring successful collaborative governance in the new millennium. In other words, the major players and actors in governance must be firmly founded on a strong and matured civil society, the one that is well disciplined, trustworthy and fully responsible. The real challenge that we must face in our quest for effective governance is to institute appropriate reforms which are not only result-oriented but also tailored to the culture and circumstances of our nation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

14. These are only some of the many questions that need to be answered if we are going to achieve a better understanding of the emerging patterns of future governance. I do not expect that we will find all the answers in just one sitting. Today's roundtable discussion is only one of the many more sessions to come. It is just the first step towards a long journey.

A journey that will determine whether we are the master of our own destiny or the casualty of the changing environment.

15. Akhir kata, sekali lagi saya mengambil kesempatan ini untuk mengucapkan terima kasih kepada INTAN di atas inisiatif mereka menganjurkan sesi "Executive Roundtable" ini. Saya berharap Y.B./Y.Bhg. Tan Sri- Tan Sri, Dato'-Dato', tuan-tuan dan puan-puan mendapat faedah daripada sesi "Executive Roundtable" ini serta mendapat mempertingkatkan kefahaman dan pengetahuan mengenai isu-isu penting berkaitan dengan corak "governance" di masa hadapan. Dengan harapan ini, saya dengan sukacitanya merasmikan "Executive Roundtable - INTAN" (ERTI) Siri 1. Bil. 1/99.