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KETUA SETIAUSAHA NEGARA
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Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh and a very Good Evening

Mr. Peter Ho
Head of Civil Service Singapore

Y.Bhg. Tan Sri Ismail Adam
Director-General of Public Service Malaysia

Professor Daniel Quinn Mills
Alfred J. Weatherhead
Professor of Business Administration
Harvard Business School

Mr. Lionel Woe
Deputy Dean & CEO, Civil Service College Singapore

Dr. Muhamad Hamzah
Director, National Institute of Public Administration Malaysia (INTAN)

Y.Bhg. Tan Sri Dr. Lin See-Yan
President Harvard Club Malaysia

Colleagues,

Allow me to first and foremost welcome our friends and counterparts from the Civil Service of Singapore. Thank you for making time for this evening and the seminar tomorrow. We are delighted to have you here. Peter, I must say that I am pleased that we can have this opportunity to meet again and catch up on things, both on a personal as well as professional level.

2. I must also extend a warm welcome to Professor Quinn Mills of the Harvard Business School. Welcome back to Malaysia.

3. Allow me to take a few moments to reflect and share my thoughts on why and how we can jointly and mutually benefit from our gathering this weekend. Having served 34 years in the Service, half of the time spent overseas, gives me some privilege to say that today both public and private sectors the world over must possess the skills of "strategic leadership" to be able to successfully and effectively cope with the demands of a globalised world. By strategic leadership skills, I mean skills that would enable an individual to not only pragmatically rise above present realities and challenges but to also be able to anticipate and plan for the variance of the future. Inculcating this skill requires not just more training and exposure, but it must also be coupled with strength of character and spirit to move mountains against the odds. This, whilst naive in wanting, is not wrong in its demands.

4. Why do I say this? The role of public service today can no longer be stereotyped. Cliché ½ as this may sound, the point remains that the civil service of today demands the kind of people, process and structure that would make the Service relevant for all times. I dare say that the three traditional and conventional roles the public sector is often associated with are fast becoming archaic. They are:

1) That public officials are agents of the state overseeing rules and regulations;

2) That public sector is simply an operator of a wide range of public services with unclear lines of

accountabilities and responsibilities; and

3) That public officials are the administering authority of macro-economic framework that is expected to provide ONLY a supportive environment for economic growth and stability.

5. The first is regulatory, the second, operational and the third is facilitative. All three are legacy beliefs which are no longer applicable in the face of a changing world, evolving customer profile as well as open and globalised markets and economies. Not only are the roles no longer representative of a public official, but the levels of competencies required to keep with the changing realities have become a moving target. So in effect, we need to be versatile in our skills to remain in the game.

6. What happens in one part of the world can well affect our side in more ways than one. In such a scenario how can we continue to embrace traditional work ethics of working within the silos of our departments and agencies? Public Officials must possess the agility and nimbleness to be able to work across ministries and sectors against the backdrop of evolving political, social, economic, and environmental conditions and settings. But this is predicated on the assumption that the public official is equipped with the appropriate skills to cope with the vagaries of political and economic situations. How do we then ensure that he or she has the wherewithal to deal with formulating strategies for such engagements?

7. The challenge with this transformation is how does one acquire such skills and mindset in the shortest period of time given the pace of change? Is it through new, as opposed to young, recruits? If so what happens to the people already in the organisation? Will training facilitate this? How much training? How much do we invest in human capital development? The human capital expansion and advancement is by far, the most complex, yet imperative asset and challenge for any Nation; for any Public Service.

8. Members of the public service and private sectors must regard each other as 'close partners' given the intricacies of the global economy, global inscriptions and our very own national aspirations. I guess the question then is which is the best model for a nation? Is there such a thing as the most effective model or the most appropriate given the parameters? How does one determine this whilst justifying to the public at large the need for such spending?

9. There is also another reality that has since evolved. For years the public service of all nations purportedly was the embodiment of patriotism, while the private sector's contribution to nation building was on the crest of economic development, growth and expansion. Today, the public service and private sector are so intertwined in the delivery of a nation's brand, its aspiration, its story and its success that the lines of delineation in the involvement of each constituent is harder to define. No one party is solely responsible for a nation's "going concern". It is the collective commitment to a cause that moves and makes the nation. It used to be that a country's competitiveness was regarded as a function of market forces. Today, it is taken for granted that public sector efficiency contributes as much to national competitiveness as does business effectiveness. This brings to the fore the imperative for public officials to be of the appropriate drive and acumen in operating in such an environment.

10. It is perhaps prudent for us bureaucrats, not to change, but change we must, to adapt to the times and demands.

11. I share these situations and circumstances as I believe they are real to Malaysia of today and of tomorrow. Of significance is not just to equip officials to face these realities today but of equal import is our ability to objectively and judiciously set the scenes of tomorrow such that what we build today, can still apply to the realities of tomorrow. This by far, is the fundamental proficiency that we need to infuse into our Service.

12. It is my hope that this seminar will provide the avenue for discourse, debate and sharing of experiences. Whilst the leadership strategies and best practices used may be different and unique to the needs of each of our two countries, I am certain that through sharing we can better harness these strategies and best practices to adapt and enhance our own public services. The cross-fertilisation of ideas may in turn generate new insights and perspectives.

13. I do hope that the interactions will also allow personal friendships to develop. We must create more opportunities for our two countries to work together on projects that will benefit its public service and its people.

14. On behalf of the Public Service of Malaysia, allow me to again welcome our friends from Singapore here again. We are indeed honoured. To my colleagues in the Malaysian Public Service, thank you for being here this evening. Our gratitude to Prof Quinn Mills for accepting our invitation to share his vast knowledge and experience with us. To Tan Sri Dr Lin See-Yan, President of the Harvard Club of Malaysia and the Charles River Centre, and to our two institutions, the Civil Service College of Singapore and INTAN, allow me to express our appreciation for all the arrangements.

Thank you.