

24/06/2009 - Effective, Efficient, Impactful Delivery System And Service: Delivering The Vision And The Promise Of The Government To The People

Bismillahir rahmanir rahim

Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh

Good Afternoon,

Y. Bhg Tan Sri Rastam Mohd. Isa
Secretary-General
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Tan Sri-Tan Sri, Dato'-Dato', Datin-Datin,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for inviting me here today to share my thoughts on how the service delivery and our unique roles within it impact the lives of the man on the street and Malaysia as a whole.

2. There is an euphemism that governments are local. The service we each receive from our councils, would define the face of the government of the day. This whilst may be the case, is not entirely true anymore. I would say, and borrowing a term used by Y.A.B. Dato' Sri Najib in his speech at the Opening of the Wanita, Youth and Puteri Umno general assemblies in 19 July 2005, to governments, and that is Governments are now GLOCAL. It is global and local. In essence, what happens to a country locally and globally affects, effects and impacts the running of that country.

3. This is no better represented by us in this room. Each of you represents THE face of Malaysia. For those who don't know Malaysia from Adam, you are the first point of reference of what we are all about.

4. How you interact and engage with and react to events, issues and customers can have direct implication to what our country represents. The responsibility that comes with your role as the brand ambassadors of Malaysia cannot be over emphasised.

WHAT AFFECTS DELIVERY SYSTEM AND THE MALAYSIAN BRAND

5. The 21st Century is defined by a shared world with unique issues that often require inimitable service resolution. Delivery system, once driven predominantly by the needs of citizens, is today defined not only by them, but also by foreigners who choose to interact with our country either locally here in Malaysia or from elsewhere. Today, the external affair of a country has direct impact on its local delivery and levels of service.

6. For instance, open burning in one country affects the air quality in another, slowing economy in one nation sees a surge of immigrants into several countries, death from viral illness can drastically change global and national healthcare agendas, the callousness in risk management by a selected few in a global company can affect not only several economies instantaneously, but has a direct and irrefutable impact on the strength of currencies, job market, training priorities and not much less economic models and priorities of nations. How we treat our visitors here could affect foreign relations.

7. Globalisation, an almost flogged beast, brings with it not only new economic opportunities but also new political, social, technological, and institutional complexities. The challenge for our Public Service in the face of a shared and globalised world is to ensure that we are equipped to respond to the events of the times.

WHAT'S THE END GAME

8. Given some of these complexities, challenges and no less opportunities and prospects the end game for a Public Service is to remain relevant for the time and for all times. The end game has to be in keeping pace with the rising expectations, sophistication and demands of our customers.

9. In meeting these demands we have a responsibility to fairly represent Malaysia, ensuring it is portrayed for all the positive virtues and strengths it has tirelessly built over the years.

CUSTOMER IN A HURRY

10. As Malaysia moves towards a developed nation, its self-actualisation imperatives on the Maslow hierarchy of needs, moves correspondingly. Consequently, we have well informed customers, who know what they want and what they are entitled to. Customers today would arrive at a point of service transaction, be it at public or private sector, only expecting desired outcome. They haven't the time to negotiate for their service or their service levels.

11. The days when the public service would have the "luxury" as it were, to have customers queue and wait for hours for a transaction is fast becoming extinct. The demand to have our service ranked and rated by the public is already here in some agencies. I would safely say that it is only a matter of time before all services are ranked and rated at the point of service delivery.

12. The challenge for us is to be able to respond, and respond intuitively. The strength will lie in whether we are able understand the very essence of communal and thereby customer advancement and evolution. Why?

13. Because this affects the way you and I will now do business no matter where we are in this world. We can no longer afford to be wry and myopic about the evolution of society. We need to arrive at a counter, better informed than the customer we are about to serve.

14. We are reminded by the public and private sector colleagues that gone are the days when public officials could choose to ignore the media, complaints, telephone rings or even letters to editors. Gone also are the days when variations in quality of service delivery would go unnoticed.

15. In the past there was deference to the providers of public services, and an ensuing readiness to accept gratefully, or reluctantly, whatever was offered. Today, any such indifference will be made known to us in person, through the media and now through the new media. The deference today, I dare say is towards the customer.

16. The net result, a Service which was once protected from open criticism, is not only open to it, but needing to promptly defend it in the name of its reputation and credibility.

CHANGED EQUATION

17. The demands of the people who expend the service are of such things as:

- i. The need for superior safety and security infrastructure to deal with complex crimes;
- ii. The need for judicious and judicial transparency and governance structure which serves the gamut and gambit of population;
- iii. The demand for straight up no-nonsense answers;
- iv. The transformation of social welfare structures to support rising competition locally and globally;
- v. The desire for a country with global brand that would respond to international trade in a flat world.

18. It is in this order that a public sector must now operate no less respond to, and do so in real time and

with competency and precision. We must now possess the skills to pre-empt future challenges and acquire response mechanisms that are fruit-bearing and outcome based

FACING OUR EVOLVING ROLES

19. YAB Dato' Sri Najib Tun Razak has called on us to partake in deeper engagement and consultation with all our stakeholders to realize the Vision of 1Malaysia, People First and Performance Now. The Prime Minister has asked that public sector looked beyond its own confined constituents and reach out to the larger landscape of building a global Malaysian brand.

20. Building of a brand requires that every constituent, public and private sectors, civil society, the public and media, each accomplished its inscribed roles and responsibilities thus enabling its fullest potentials.

BUILDING BRAND THROUGH TRUST AND SERVICE

21. As the agents of Malaysia overseas, you have the responsibility to represent our country, and to represent us well. The skills you possess must enable you to engage and interact with people from all colours and creed and from any and all continents. You must be able to engage people from various view points, much less our harshest critics.

22. In all of these situations, the overarching responsibility is simply one – that the Malaysian brand is not compromised. That you make our country proud abroad.

23. This said there are components that make a nation's brand. To ensure every constituent that makes a nation, a market and a society is groomed to its full potential, we need a Public Service that supports, promotes and facilitates the ability of all its constituents, from business enterprises to individuals to compete in local and international markets. We must facilitate everyone to promote the brand of Malaysia globally, making it a formidable brand.

24. How we enable and support businesses defines the type of investors we draw to our country. How the public service resonates with the corporate sector and civil society towards one common national vision will determine how Malaysia is portrayed and perceived in the international arena. How we educate our young and groom our youth characterises the future of Malaysia. How we serve the poor and underprivileged will depict the heart and morals of our society. Indeed how we structure and deliver all social welfare support systems would stand us apart from our competitive peers. This is relevant to all the countries you would operate in.

25. Simply put the quality with which we SERVE Malaysia locally and globally will determine its brand. The bottom-line for us in public service is simply DELIVERY itself!

THE MEDIA AND US

Colleagues,

26. Public relations by far have been one of the weakest links in the public sector. We don't share our work, its rationale and achievements with the public, never mind the media. This has unfortunately cost us some slack, and without a doubt this is one key area that needs to change.

27. To ensure the goal of incorporating valuable input from the public is met, I urge you to interact and engage with all stakeholders before, during and after a process that affects the public interest.

28. It is imperative that Secretaries-General and Heads of Agencies take control of their Communications plans and execution for their Ministries. On our part, improving relationships begins by understanding the media and their requirements for newsworthy information. We must be able to meet media's demands for responsiveness, timeliness and accessibility, at the same time.

29. I would urge you to interact and engage with media in the countries you represent, making foreign media access easy for Malaysia. You could go to local press clubs and engage the media. You could assist in further building the Malaysian brand through those networkings.

30. The Public Service today has to respond not only to the conventional media but the alternative media. The speed of information is such that countries and companies today need web based crisis management plans to address effects of negative blog in times of crisis. We must possess the skills to face and interact with this changing landscape without fear and intimidation.

31. This by far, I would add, is our biggest challenge yet. We have often operated in our own world view of what is best for our customers. We need to move from them and us to US, the people and the country.

32. The media is often seen as knowing it all and a territory that cannot be countered, cannot be touched, never mind cannot be overtaken. We can if we dare and most importantly if we have the facts. The final analysis with media, from my own experience, is regular interaction. The vilest nemesis can be a friend.

33. I would thus urge each and everyone of you to make the media in your host country, your friend and your ally. This does not mean they write for you but that they write fairly. You have an invaluable opportunity to interact with various foreign media and use it as a conduit and channel to build the brand of Malaysia positively.

BUILDING CAPACITY - SERVING WITH INTEGRITY AND CHARACTER

34. The future of the public sector as I described earlier is determined by a complex array of interconnected drivers. The ways in which these drivers might be expected to play out is steered by prosaic to totally capricious events. Therefore an agile and adaptive public sector is critical to effective policy development and service delivery.

35. To achieve this we need to basically:

i. Do away with unnecessary bureaucracies and inflexibilities in administrative systems and processes, making it more user friendly for the customers;

ii. Develop the relationships and skills required to work across public and private sectors;

iii. Build a stronger evidence and fact-based public administration;

iv. Break down 'silo' working style approaches and work across aisles to achieve holistic resolutions and solutions.

BUILDING THE MALAYSIAN BRAND FOR GOVERNMENT OF THE FUTURE

36. What defines the Government of the Future? Is it driven by digital expansion with reduced headcount in public administration? Or is it in the intellectual rise with eradication of poverty? Is it perhaps in the death of bureaucracy? Or must it be solely based on service driven by customer deference? Or all of the above, as they say?

37. I would say that the Government of the Future is a Nation that empowers its Public Service to respond to the threats and opportunities of the times locally and globally. We need to collectively reflect whether today, we have an underlying model of continuous improvement to see any and all global scenarios?

38. Have we the mechanism and capability to deal with the "what ifs" and the "black swans" that would affect our competitiveness and challenge our relevance? Have we built the Government of the Future for our children? In short and simply put, ARE We a Public Service that will rise to the changing yet unchartered expectations?

39. To be able to rise to any and all times, I would argue, we need public officials who would challenge the norms, dare the traditions and customs of what used to work. We must crush the soiled image of

being the 8 to 4 engines of the government, to agents of the government who work from where you are and not where the office is and round the clock. We need officials who would perform to unyielding and unwavering integrity and dedication; always going the extra mile for the customers.

40. We must be acutely intuitive of how we impact on each other's performance and how our day-to-day decisions affect people and the larger systems around us.

41. If EXCELLENCE, QUALITY and PRECISION are the themes of our performance scorecard, OUR DELIVERY AND SERVICE must be the OUTCOMES by which the themes will be measured.

42. In a nutshell, we must always think like a CUSTOMER to serve the CUSTOMER.

On that note, I thank you again for inviting me and I am keen to listen to your thoughts and ideas on the subject how together we can improve our service.

Wabillahittaufig walhidayah wassalamualaikum warahmatullah wabarakatuh.