

AT THE FOREFRONT OF NATION BUILDING

**PERSPECTIVES FROM THE
ADMINISTRATIVE AND DIPLOMATIC SERVICE**

**SHEENA GURBAKHASH
FIONA GHAUS**



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PUSTAKA PERDANA



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FOREWORD

It is with great pleasure that I present the third publication of the Alumni Association of the Administrative and Diplomatic Officers (PTD Alumni), on the occasion of our 25th Anniversary. Our previous publications are the extremely erudite *Service Par Excellence* by Dato' Wan Mansor Abdullah and his team which included Dato' Seri Mohamed Khalil Hussein, Dato' Nik Mohamad Nik Salleh and Mr. Veloo Saminathan, and a vibrant coffee-table book by Dato' Halipah Esa celebrating the 21st Anniversary of the Alumni.

I have always believed that a career in the *Perkhidmatan Tadbir dan Diplomatik* (PTD) is not a job but a calling. I must admit, that when I first started work in the Malayan Civil Service (MCS) (as it was called in those days), I did not wholly understand the full extent of the trust and responsibility bestowed upon us. In my career, I had the honour of serving in the Governments of four Prime Ministers, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj, Tun Abdul Razak Hussein, Tun Hussein Onn and Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad. My colleagues in service, both from the PTD and other branches of the Public Service, were talented and dedicated people of impeccable integrity. Together we forged the nation, from Malaya to Malaysia, and guided the country through some of its most harrowing moments.

The PTD has a rich history. It is the inheritance of our colonial past. It can be said that the British Civil Service Officers who came



to the Malay States in the 18th and 19th Centuries took on the role of ruling, being responsible for almost all matters of administration (except for customary law and religion) and the collection of revenue. The barriers for local Malay aristocrats to join the Civil Service in the Federated Malay States were only lifted in the early 20th Century. Malay College Kuala Kangsar was established in 1905 for the purpose of training the sons of the aristocracy to administer the country. In its early days, the sons of ordinary people were excluded from its hallowed halls of learning. In those days, the idea of women being educated and joining the Service was also unthinkable. However, we have come a long way since then.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, MCS officers were at the forefront of the movement for Independence. It can be said that they were the only ones with any knowledge or experience of Government. The post of *Menteri Besar* was a Civil Service appointment at the time. Malay Administrative Service (MAS) and MCS officers, together with their counterparts in the State administrations, played a major role in the creation of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), which together with the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC) went on to negotiate independence for the nation. Some officers left the Civil Service to become politicians, most notably Tun Abdul Razak, but many more remained in service and were actively involved in determining the details of the Constitution and negotiations for Independence.

I will go so far as to say, these early officers did far more than just administer the country. They made policy, advised the politicians and the Rulers, and set the standards. As a nation, we owe a debt of gratitude to these officers, who formulated the policies and put in place the systems that set the country on the road to development and yet, they are invisible. It is disappointing that their role is so seldom mentioned in history books nor are they remembered for their contributions. I am reminded that back then, the right to affix the initials MCS to your name was considered an honour and a privilege.

Several years ago, Tun Mahathir Mohamad suggested, and I concur, that the practice should be reinstated to remind PTD officers of their proud heritage and the standards of loyalty, service and dedication that they should uphold, although today, we would use the initials PTD instead.

When I and others of my generation were growing up, even the District Officers were British. The officers of the MAS played a support role to these British administrators. Those of us who grew up in the post-War period were guided by our parents and teachers to aspire to join government service, which, in their view offered stable prospects. To reach the rank of District Officer was considered a great achievement. This was the pinnacle of their ambition for us because they could not see us going any further. At the time, there were very few other opportunities as the private sector was very small and concentrated mainly in the urban areas. Many of us who joined government service in the 'Merdeka years' were the first in our families to go to University. We came from all walks of life. Few of us came from money or the aristocracy; we were however, determined to succeed, not just for ourselves, but for the betterment of the nation.

As PTD officers, we were given the opportunity to be the best that we could be. I believe this is true even today. Although opportunities abound, serving the nation is a privilege. Every Malaysian has a stake in the success of the nation and should strive for it. As stakeholders, we determine who runs the country by our votes. As serving officers, we play a direct role in implementing the policies and directions that are determined by elected officials. Although we must have loyalty to the Government of the day, ultimately we serve the people. Having now worked both in the public and private sectors, I believe that the nation's development can only be achieved if all parties work together.

We have now been an independent nation for almost sixty years. During this time, PTD officers have played a role in the creation and

management of key agencies, institutions of higher education, and some of the country's most successful private enterprises. Working with our professional counterparts within the Public Service, we planned and supervised the construction of key infrastructure. PTD officers have been in the front line in managing every crisis faced by the nation, from the Emergency in the 1950s to the Asian Financial Crisis in the late 1990s. We have managed the country's diplomatic relations. It was PTD officers in the EPU, working with their counterparts in other ministries, who formulated the Five Year Development Plans and other blueprints for development, which took the country through its transition from a rural agricultural-based economy to a modern economy. In short, we have played a key role in transforming the country into a modern democratic nation with a robust and vibrant private sector. All this was done quietly and with no fanfare for it is not in our nature to draw attention to ourselves.

The PTD plays a lead role in co-ordinating and managing ministries and all the other branches of the Public Service both at State and Federal levels, including the allocation and monitoring of expenditure and management of personnel throughout the Public Service. Fundamentally, the PTD must do its job well, to ensure that every other branch of the administration and government is able to function at its highest level.

This book, which is based on the collective memories of the members of the Alumni, is more than a record of what was done. It is our gift to those who follow in our footsteps and will continue with the task of taking the nation to the next level. It is also a tribute to those who accomplished so much for the country and are no longer with us. It is my sincere wish that this book will be an inspiration to the current and future generations of PTD officers.

I wish to remind those who come after us that the job of building and developing the nation is on-going. The pressures they face are quite different from those faced by the earliest officers but no less

onerous. Today, the challenge for PTD officers is not to just get the facts, but to sift through the wealth of information available to ensure that they are armed with the right facts. As the country matures as a democracy, it is all the more imperative that the apolitical nature of the PTD is maintained. The challenges faced by the country are not just local but global. We live in a 'global village'. Issues like finance, health and the environment now have global implications. Events that take place across the seas can have a significant impact at home.

As Public Servants, we owe loyalty to the Government. While we can offer advice and recommend what is in our view the best course of action, it is our duty to abide by the decisions that are made, and carry them out to the best of our ability. This is our duty. While we are bound to obedience and loyalty, this is by no means blind obedience. It is incumbent on us to play an ever more vigilant role in safeguarding the nation's resources and finances and ensure transparency and accountability in Government. It is now more imperative than ever that PTD officers practise and adopt the highest standards of integrity and honesty. It takes courage to say no and to insist that procedure and due process are followed. When we fail to do so, we fail in our duty and open the door to the evils of corruption. This is the challenge for those who are in leadership positions, to set that example and set the standards for their subordinates and ensure that those standards are upheld.

I strongly believe we in the Alumni still have a key role to play in taking the nation forward. During our years in service, it was our privilege to be sent for training and higher education. The Government spared no expense in nurturing and developing our skills. Many of us played a part in formulating and implementing key initiatives and policies. Much of what we know has not been adequately recorded, or is buried in files long gone into storage. Many of us went on to serve in the private sector after we retired from the Service. So, I can say with confidence that we have seen things from both sides of the table. I see collaboration as an opportunity to combine our knowledge

with the energy of younger officers. Together, we can do wonders. We may be older, we may not be as quick as we once were, but we are much wiser, and are more than eager and willing to share our perspectives with the current and future generations of PTD officers. It is my hope, that in the future, we will be invited to take a bigger role in sharing our experiences and in mentoring and training future generations of the PTD.

In conclusion, I would like to thank members of the Alumni who so generously gave their time and shared insights and details about their lives and work and their perspectives of key events in the country's development to enable us to create this record. Every PTD officer has in some small way made a contribution to the development of the nation, but it was impossible for us to speak to everyone, or list every programme and initiative implemented. For this I apologise. We have endeavoured to present an overview of our role in the nation's progress. It is my hope that this book will lead to greater interest and more dialogue about where the nation is going and the role that the Public Service, as a whole, will play in moving the nation forward.

For many of the people our writers spoke to, their participation in this book is an act of courage. I am impressed and humbled by the candour of so many of my colleagues. As Civil Servants, we are accustomed to staying in the background and being judged only by our work. Looking back, there may be things we wished we had done differently, but in all good conscience we can say, we always strived to act in the best interests of the nation, with loyalty and integrity, even when what we needed to do was difficult and unpopular.

I also convey my thanks to the Executive Committee of the Alumni and the Editorial Sub-Committee, so ably guided by Tan Sri Nuraizah Abdul Hamid and supported by Datuk Merlyn Kasimir, Datu Michael Lunjew and Lee Meng Foon who worked with our writers from the initial concept of the book up to the final product. I would also like to express my gratitude to our publisher UiTM Press,

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And lastly, I hope, that you, the Reader, will enjoy reading this book as much as we have enjoyed putting it together.

Tan Sri Dato' Sri Sallehuddin Mohamed
PRESIDENT
PTD Alumni Association



NOTE FROM THE WRITERS

Writing this book has been an honour. Over the course of the past eighteen months, we were privileged to get an intimate view of a world that remains almost hidden from public view. Our explorations of this world gave us insight, not just into how the decisions that affect us all are made and implemented, but also about the characters and values of the men and women who have walked the corridors of power, setting events in motion that affect the lives of millions. We hope this book will result in more Malaysians taking an interest in the work of Government because this country belongs to all of us.

One of the many challenges of writing a book of this nature is resisting the temptation to flatter. It was difficult at times not to be completely in awe of those we met and interviewed, and we will always be tremendously grateful for their warmth and graciousness when answering our many questions. However, the phrase we heard over and over again, in the course of our many interviews was a humble, “I did my work.” Our work as writers, has been to do justice to the truths that were shared with us and share them in turn, without flattery or favour with the world.

We would like to express our thanks to the PTD Alumni for giving us the opportunity to research and write this book. In particular, we would like to thank Tan Sri Sallehuddin Mohamed and Tan Sri Nuraizah Abdul Hamid for their patience and generosity of spirit in



guiding us through the intricacies of the PTD and the Public Service. We would also like to thank Datuk Merlyn Kasimir, Datuk Michael Lunjew, Dato' Azhar Abu Bakar and Lee Meng Foon who offered invaluable suggestions to improve the various drafts of the book, and spent numerous hours refining our ideas and making sure we got it right. Thank you, from the bottom of our hearts.

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A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE PTD ALUMNI

THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND DIPLOMATIC OFFICERS

The Alumni Association of the Administrative and Diplomatic Officers (PTD Alumni) was registered on 19th April 1989 (892/89 Wilayah Persekutuan). It is an association of former PTD officers who served in the Administrative and Diplomatic Service known, initially, as the Malayan Civil Service (MCS) and generally regarded as the premier service of the Malaysian Government. The first Annual General Meeting of the PTD Alumni was held on 5th March 1991. Tun Abdullah Mohd. Salleh was elected the first President and served for six years until 1997, when Tan Sri Sallehuddin Mohamed, the current President, succeeded him.

Established to foster and strengthen relationships among its members, the PTD Alumni provides opportunities for members to meet by organising a range of social activities. A more important objective however, is to provide a platform for members to continue to serve the nation and society, including giving assistance and input toward the implementation and achievement of government policies, strengthening the relationship between the public and private sectors, and offering frank and constructive views and opinions as valuable feedback to the Government of the day, as well as other expertise as required.

Educational talks and dialogues are organised to enable members to keep abreast of current political and economic developments both at home and in the global arena. The PTD Alumni has made substantive recommendations, by way of submission of memoranda and policy reviews, to the Prime Minister. Some of the matters that have been addressed include the Tenth Malaysia Plan (2011 - 2015), as well as recommendations made at the PTD Alumni Economic Forum in 2009. The PTD Alumni also offered input on the Goods and Services Tax (GST) and the New Economic Model in 2010 and, most recently, the Strategic Direction for the Public Service in the Next Five Years in 2013. These memoranda and policy reviews are the result of seminars and forums organised to harness the views and ideas of its members to assist the government in policy formulation in the areas concerned.

The PTD Alumni plays a key role in maintaining and strengthening links amongst its members. In addition to the Annual Dinners, social events to celebrate various festivals, golf games and tournaments and overseas trips (the most recent being a fact-finding trip to Myanmar in December 2013) take place on a regular basis. Efforts are also taken to ensure the well-being of the members. This includes holding health talks and visiting members who are ill or hospitalised. It also makes donations on behalf of its members to welfare organisations and charities.

The PTD Alumni currently has about 500 members; many of them have served more than thirty years in the Public Service and have held high administrative posts and leadership positions in the Government, including heading ministries, State administrations, departments and agencies, both at the Federal and State levels, as well as serving in Malaysian diplomatic missions abroad. With their wealth of experience and insight, extensive knowledge in government administration and policy formulation, PTD Alumni members are more than willing to share their expertise for the continuing progress of the nation.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACA	Anti-Corruption Agency
ADO	Assistant District Officer
AMDA	Anglo-Malayan Defence Agreement
ASA	Association of Southeast Asia
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASN	Amanah Saham Nasional
Bank Negara	Bank Negara Malaysia
CFTC	Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation
CHOGM	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
CPM	Communist Party of Malaysia
CUEPACS	Congress of Unions of Employees in the Public and Civil Services
DADO	Deputy Assistant District Officer
DAP	Democratic Action Party
DAU	Development Administration Unit
DO	District Officer
DWEC	District War Executive Committee
ECC	Economic Committee to the Cabinet
EPF	Employees' Provident Fund
EPU	Economic Planning Unit
ES	Economic Secretariat
FEFC	Far East Freight Conference
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FEO	Federal Establishment Office

FMS	Federated Malay States
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ICDAU	Implementation Coordination and Development Administration Unit
ICU	Implementation Coordination Unit
INTAN	National Institute of Public Administration
ITM	Institut Teknologi MARA
JRA	Japanese Red Army
MAMPU	Malaysian Administration Modernisation and Management Planning Unit
MARA	Majlis Amanah Rakyat
MAS	Malay Administrative Service
MCA	Malayan (later Malaysian) Chinese Association
MCKK	Malay College Kuala Kangsar
MCS	Malayan Civil Service
MDeC	Multimedia Development Corporation
MIC	Malayan (later Malaysian) Indian Congress
MIDA	Malaysian Industrial Development Authority now known as Malaysian Investment Development Authority
MSA	Malaysia-Singapore Airlines
MSC	Multimedia Super Corridor
MTCP	Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme
NCC	National Consultative Council
NDP	National Development Policy
NDPC	National Development Planning Committee
NEP	New Economic Policy
NOC	National Operations Council
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation previously known as Organisation of Islamic Countries
OPPI	First Outline Perspective Plan (1971-1990)
OPPII	Second Outline Perspective Plan (1991-2000)
OPPIII	Third Outline Perspective Plan (2001-2010)
PAP	People's Action Party

PAS	Pan-Malayan (later Malaysian) Islamic Party
PDLN	<i>Perkhidmatan Dalam dan Luar Negeri</i> (Malaysian Home and Foreign Service)
PNB	Permodalan Nasional Berhad
PSC	Public Services Commission
PSD	Public Service Department
PTD	<i>Perkhidmatan Tadbir dan Diplomatik</i> (Administrative and Diplomatic Service)
RIDA	Rural Industrial Development Authority
SSB	<i>Sistem Saraan Baru</i> (New Remuneration System)
SSM	<i>Sistem Saraan Malaysia</i> (Malaysian Remuneration System)
SUPP	Sarawak United People's Party
SWEC	State War Executive Committee
UFMS	Un-Federated Malay States
UKM	Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
UMNO	United Malays National Organisation
UN	United Nations
UPM	Universiti Pertanian Malaysia now known as Universiti Putra Malaysia
ZOPFAN	Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality

Commonly used Malay words:

<i>Bumiputra</i>	: literally 'sons of the soil', a term commonly used to refer to Malay and indigenous people of Malaysia
<i>Kampung</i>	: Village or settlement
<i>Menteri Besar</i>	: Head of a State Government
<i>Padi</i>	: Rice or rice plant
<i>Penghulu</i>	: Village Headman
<i>Yang di-Pertuan Agong</i>	: Constitutional Monarch and Head of State of Malaysia

EXPLANATORY NOTES:

1. The MCS was renamed the Malaysian Home and Foreign Service (PDLN), in 1966 when the External and Home Services were consolidated. In 1972, the service was renamed the *Perkhidmatan Tadbir dan Diplomatik* (PTD). As far as possible, the abbreviations have been used chronologically.
2. For ease of reading, and to avoid confusion, the use of titles has been minimised. Where individuals have been bestowed with several titles at State and Federal level or honorary Doctorates, only the highest title has been provided in parenthesis or as part of the text, at the first reference to a personage. The exception is when a title has been used in direct speech and quotations from interviewees and other sources when it has been used unchanged as quoted. As a result there may be instances when someone may be referred to by their title at the time, even if a higher award has been bestowed later.

CHAPTER ONE

MASTERS AND SERVANTS

“Being a servant is not the same as being servile. A good servant is not one who just does as he is told. A good servant anticipates what is required and ensures it is ready for when it is needed.”

Tan Sri Dato’ Sri (Dr.) Sallehuddin Mohamed
Chief Secretary to the Government from 1984 - 1990.

History teaches us that all societies evolve. The most successful societies are those that are able to change peaceably and systematically, by creating, adapting or exchanging knowledge and practices that increase prosperity and security for their citizens. Good government hinges on the ability of those in power to cater to the needs, wants, hopes and aspirations of its people. A key component of good government is a strong administration. It takes a strong administration with mature practices to define and implement policies that bring about change and drive development. Since Independence was declared on the 31st August 1957, Malaya (later Malaysia) has had its fair share of social, political and economic challenges. The stakes for its continued growth and success have always been high. Through adroit socio-economic reinvention, Malaysia has moved from a mainly rural agricultural-based economy to an urban industrial one. Unlike many countries that obtained their independence in the aftermath of the Second World War, Malaysia’s transition to independence was peaceful and it has maintained its status as a parliamentary democracy.



CIVIL SERVANTS SHOULD BE NEITHER SEEN NOR HEARD....

For generations, Officers in the Perkhidmatan Tadbir dan Diplomatik (PTD) (Administrative and Diplomatic Service) have worked quietly and anonymously behind the scenes recommending, formulating and implementing the policies that shaped the country. Holding true to the ethos that their role involved neither being seen nor heard, many are speaking out for the first time, sharing their views on what it was like to be there when key decisions were made and how they were implemented.



Commissioned by the PTD Alumni in conjunction with its 25th Anniversary and based on extensive in-depth interviews with Officers who served from the 1940s to present day, *At The Forefront Of Nation Building* offers a rare glimpse into the offices and meeting rooms where decisions are made and implemented.

For anyone who has ever wondered about what really goes on behind the closed doors of Government, *At The Forefront Of Nation Building* provides a fascinating insight into the backgrounds and thoughts of some of the men and women who rose to hold the highest positions in administration, their relationships with their political leaders, and their thoughts about the state of the nation.

This book is a must read for anyone interested in Malaysia's history, its development and the future and role of the PTD in taking Malaysia to the next level.