

## **Presentation Session of the Young Officer Leadership Programme – A Partnership Programme between Razak School of Government and the British High Commission Kuala Lumpur**

**When** : 27 March 2014

**Where** : Razak School of Government

### **Summary**

Confidence, openness, resilience and leadership – these are the four crucial qualities in young public servants as imparted by Mr Robert Devereux, the United Kingdom Permanent Secretary of the Department for Work and Pensions at the presentation session of the Young Officer Leadership Programme.

The presentation session is part of the requirement for the five young officers of the Malaysian Public Service who participated in the partnership programme between Razak School of Government and the British High Commission Kuala Lumpur. In February, the young officers – Hazeelia Muhammad of Attorney General's Chambers, Rina Hanis Rodzli of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Angelina Gurunathan of Ministry of International Trade and Industry, Fazidah Fadzil of Public Services Department, and Radziah Alwi Mohamad of Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, participated in a week-long programme in London with the objective of experiential learning, exchange of views and values while obtaining greater insights to the United Kingdom's systems and policymaking processes. These are in addition to enhancing the existing bilateral relationship between the two countries. Targeted at emerging public sector leaders, the programme is in line with ongoing reforms for a more engaging, forward thinking, transparent and accountable public service. Through a stringent selection process, only five out of 20 candidates nominated by selected ministries and agencies were chosen to participate in the programme.

The programme culminated with individual presentations on 27 March 2013, where participants presented their policy-related findings to an audience that included His Excellency Mr Simon Featherstone, British High Commissioner to Malaysia; Mr Robert Devereux, the United Kingdom Permanent Secretary of the Department for Work and Pensions; YBhg. Tan Sri Faizah Tahir, Chairman of Agro Bank who was also former Secretary-General of the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development; and Chief Executive Officer of RSOG. Considering a time constraints, participants were only allotted with 10 minutes each for a brief yet impactful presentation of a challenging policy issue and ideas on how to address it. The presentation was to be based on well-researched ground work including new ideas and insights gained via experience

sharing in the UK, and applying them to propose solutions at their respective areas of work. In addition to the presentations, participants were also required to submit a post-programme write up on policy ideas as well as post their personal observations on the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office's blog (<http://blogs.fco.gov.uk/nikeshmehta/2014/03/27/civil-servants-visit-familiarisation-foreign-policy-and-fish-and-chips/>).

The variety of participants' attachments and backgrounds ensured that the presentations focused on policy issues evident at their respective ministries and agencies. However, three common themes could be derived from their presentations – inculcating effective and meaningful engagement; the need for capacity-building; and overcoming resource constraints. These are consistent with the values RSOG attempts to impart in all of its programmes – wisdom, people and innovation. Members of the audience were given the opportunity to seek further clarification during the Q&A session at the end of each presentation. This provided the opportunity for the participants to exercise their skills in dialogue and defending their key ideas.

Towards the end of the session, Mr Devereux provided some notable observations on the presentation and the programme as a whole. The issues and problems faced in this part of the world are not unique to Malaysia, as the UK and many other countries are facing similar problems. These problems are due to the nature of public sector work as they are contestable in society and exists in a contested space. In facing these challenges, four qualities are needed: -

- a) Confidence is needed in facing and dealing with challenging issues and a demanding public. One needs to thoroughly understand the subject matter at hand and have confidence in implementation and execution
- b) Openness is crucial in engagement as there are no harm in accepting other people's ideas. An unrestricted climate where civil service is able to gain new ideas elsewhere and obtain new ways of doing things leads to further improvement.
- c) Resilience is key in light of constant challenges and an increasingly constrained environment. Problems that exists in the public service are often generational, therefore continued relationships and partnerships such as what has been borne out of the Young Officer Leadership Programme can provide the necessary support.
- d) Leadership qualities makes a difference in an environment where teamwork is fundamental to its operation and execution.

His Excellency Mr Simon Featherstone echoed Dr Hamidin's sentiments on hoping that this inaugural programme would spur deeper partnerships between the two countries and serve as an opportunity for other related activities to be organised. He believes that

the structured and interesting presentations capped the success of the programme and urged the participants to utilise the knowledge obtained to help their colleagues in their respective ministries and the public service as a whole.

“Nothing ever becomes real 'til it is experienced.”

-John Keats

## **About British High Commission Kuala Lumpur**

The British High Commission Kuala Lumpur is part of the United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Its aim is to improve the important and longstanding relationship between the UK and Malaysia by expanding trade and investment opportunities. It also work on foreign policy, defence and security issues, and encourage people-to-people links and scientific, educational and environmental exchanges, and provide consular support to British nationals. One of its several main areas of bilateral relationships include working with the Malaysian government on issues of common concern.

## **[Photo Gallery](#)**