

RSOG Leadership Forum

with

YBhg. Tan Sri Dato' Seri Utama Arsyad Ayub

When : 14 August 2014
Where : Razak School of Government
Speakers : YBhg. Tan Sri Dato' Seri Utama Arsyad Ayub

About The Seminar

A towering personality who has served a distinguished career in ministries, the central bank as well as a university, Tan Sri Arsyad Ayub's outstanding track record in the Public Service gained admiration even from the private sector where he was invited to take leadership roles in many corporations. In this Leadership Forum, Tan Sri Arsyad Ayub shared his broad Public Service experience particularly in laying the foundation and development of the Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM). Examples of the wisdom embodied in UiTM's unique case include the opening up of branch campuses in various states, the integration of various ethnic groups in a young university and the role of education in development.

Summary

Winston Churchill once said "the farther back you can look, the farther forward you are likely to see". History matters; that was the first idea Tan Sri Arsyad Ayub shared with the audience when he uncovered his difficult childhood; suffering a pandemic; the passing of his parents; the responsibility of raising younger siblings; and living in poverty. It took him almost 21 years from his birth to first set foot in Kuala Lumpur. He was denied the joy and vigour of youth that many others enjoy. The patience, perseverance and persistence that he possesses today, is largely due to his difficult past.

Good things come to those who are patient. The opportunity to study at the College of Agriculture in Serdang was a huge milestone in his struggle to improve his life. Whilst knowledge is important, the wisdom derived from a body of knowledge is equally

important, if not more. Agriculture instilled in Tan Sri Arsyad a sense of importance of nurturing a seed. He applied this philosophy when he was entrusted with educating underprivileged students at the then Institut Teknologi MARA. He believed that academically weaker students could be developed to their fullest potential with the right approaches. He knew that curriculum alone was not sufficient in nurturing such students especially in commerce-related disciplines, which was at the time dominated by the non-Bumiputra. Consequently, he assembled a team of multicultural educationists to provide the 'exposure' and 'diversity' part in learning. He encouraged students to be multilingual and less rigid in their mindsets. He believed this would help them improve their marketability.

Tan Sri Arsyad saw education as the main precursor to social upward mobility. He was instrumental in expediting the establishment of branch campuses throughout the country. Apart from offering wider accessibility to tertiary education, branch campuses also help spur the development of its neighbouring community not least through the shift of brains that enrich the quality of social interactions in the area. Of course there are other indirect multiplier effects to development such as job opportunities and the appreciation in property values.

Tan Sri Arsyad believes a good working relationship between the Federal and State administrations is important in ensuring a timely and effective development of the branch campuses. He drew the attention of the audience to the significance of the Federation; where the respective states entered into a 'union' on agreed terms and conditions. This historical legacy need to be understood and upheld.

As far as leadership is concerned, he believes that context can affect a particular leadership style. As such, he urged the audience to take every opportunity that comes to them to broaden their knowledge and experience, believing that it would provide them the wisdom to make decisions and lead effectively.

He admits that he himself is strong willed and self-driven in many ways. Yet, he acknowledges the importance of compromise. He told the audience that he had his fair share of ups and downs during his tenure in the public service life, but advised that in such situations, leaders must not be discouraged but always view dealing with setbacks as a responsibility or 'amanah' to be uphold with sincerity and integrity all the times. He advised the audience to focus serving the people wholeheartedly if they want to achieve inner peace.

Tan Sri Arsyad also touched on risk-taking. He shared some of the courageous acts that were taken to propel Institut Teknologi MARA forward. He believes if such courageous action is sincere and not self-serving, it will be understood and eventually accepted by others. Tan Sri Arsyad believes his mission has helped him to be courageous – he knew what he wanted, and that was to help poor Bumiputera students. He understood poverty and was determined to do all he could for the less fortunate.

Towards the end of his talk, Tan Sri Arsyad shared about his life post public service; his involvement in the corporate sector and charitable activities. He was quite surprised with the opportunities that came his way but took them in stride as part of his life's philosophy of being patient and sincere.

Issues Raised :

- Experience can teach us to better ourselves, not to repeat mistakes and continue to improve.
- Every person has leadership qualities. However, we need to nurture these qualities and build upon experience.
- An effective transformation is dependent upon effective and sincere people to carry out its implementation.
- The country's history must become a compulsory subject at the preschool level so that the younger generation understand fully the intricacies of the nation's formations and the role of 'social contract' in ensuring peace and stability in the country.

About The Speaker

Tan Sri Arsyad Ayub, 86, was born in Muar, Johor into a modest rubber tapping family. Those difficult early years were formative to his subsequent calling as an educator and civil servant. Tasked by the late Prime Minister, Tun Abdul Razak, with the challenge of remedying the under-representation of the Bumiputra in the professions, Tan Sri Arsyad Ayub relinquished well-trodden paths and blazed new trails. He assembled a multiracial team of educationists with the right mix of courage and passion to do things not done before. Following his time at ITM he steadily climbed the ladder of the civil service to reach the rank of Secretary General of three Ministries by the time he retired in 1983. He has also served Bank Negara Malaysia and Economic Planning Unit.

Contact

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