

RSOG Leadership Forum

with

YB Tan Sri Datuk Amar Haji Mohamad Morshidi Abdul Ghani

When : 7 May 2015
Where : Razak School of Government
Speakers : YB Tan Sri Datuk Amar Haji Mohamad Morshidi Abdul Ghani

About The Seminar

Vast land areas, long coastlines and international borders, extensive waterways, rich resources, ethnically diverse and a unique history, Sarawak is in a league of its own as far as state administration is concerned. Sarawak Civil Service witnessed various phases of evolution over the last century from the General Administration and Consolidation Era to the Strategic Government Era. A firm believer that change is inevitable and continuous, YB Tan Sri Datuk Amar Haji Mohamad Morshidi Abdul Ghani led the Sarawak Civil Service into the Transformational Government Era. Eight Actions Plans covering a period of ten-year were introduced in 2010 to transform Sarawak Civil Service to be world class. With a headcount of more than 25, 000 that cuts across numerous ministries, agencies, and statutory bodies, such transformation journey is no walk in the park. YB Tan Sri Datuk Amar Haji Mohamad Morshidi Abdul Ghani is expected to share his leadership wisdoms and insights in this forum.

Summary

Sarawak is a state that is located at the East of Malaysia, which has long coastlines, vast land areas, rich resources and long international borders. It is 124,450 sq. km in area, nearly 1/3 of Malaysia. Despite that, its population is only a mere 2.6 million people. Sarawak's unique history traces back to the pre-1839 era, where it was still under the Brunei Sultanate. In 1841, a British adventurer by the name of James Brooke founded the state. The Brooke era lasted for nearly 105 years where James Brooke (1841) was ascended by his son Charles Brooke (1848) and then cousin Charles Vyner Brooke

(1870). The Brooke family in some parts helped the Sultans to fight off revolts and pirates that was trying to conquer Sarawak. During 1941 to 1945, the Japanese occupied the country for 5 years before the British took hold of the Malay Peninsula for nearly 17 years from 1946-1963. On the 16th of September 1963, Malaysia was formed hence Sarawak was declared as one of Malaysia's 14 states.

Sarawak is a multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-lingual state. Despite the differences, many Sarawakians live together in harmony through the practice of tolerance, peace and acceptance. There are about 27 languages used by Sarawakians from different backgrounds and various religions including Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and paganism. Sarawak's administration structure of the state government on the other hand is branched out into the three branches of the legislative, judicial as well as the executive level like many other states. Unlike the rest, however, Sarawak and Sabah is the only two states in Malaysia with a native court where native disputes over lands issues as well as other ground issues are resolved. This shows a clear example of the preservation of rights of the minorities. There are about 13 ministries with some ministers covering 2 ministries.

Despite Sarawak's abundance in wealth and natural resources, Sarawak's infrastructure is still lagging behind. Sarawak's roads are still underdeveloped with quality that still lags behind in contrast to the roads in West Malaysia. Many areas in Sarawak are still disconnected from roads while some areas only have underdeveloped roads that would take days for one to reach these areas. 40% of Sarawakians still live in rural areas where as 50% of the people are still deprived of basic infrastructures. While Sarawak's growth rate is at an impressive 4% - 6%, 40 % of the economy is from oil, gas and its natural products (LNG), hence a greater need to diversify the economy. Nevertheless, the state's financial and state credit rating is in good health. It was rated by Standard and Poor's and Moody's Investor Services as an A- and A3 respectively, with a stable outlook. Due to Sarawak's richness in wealth and natural resources, there is a high opportunity to develop Sarawak's eco-tourism industry to drive in more international tourist. The World Rainforest event is an iconic event to attract tourists into the state.

Sarawak's development strategies went through a phase of evolution which includes the era of politics of development (1981-2000) through the agriculture and manufacturing economy, the New Reality (2000) and the Second Wave of Development (2006-2030) through the heavy industry and a knowledge-based economy. Similarly, Sarawak's Civil Service went through similar experiences of evolution through the general administration and consolidation phase, the new public sector management phase, the entrepreneurial government, networked government (through IT development) strategic government and the transformation phase. During the consolidation era, the Sarawak civil service went through what was called as the Borneonization of Civil Service. This is to bring in more local talents into the Sarawak Civil Service given the overwhelming monopoly of British administrators in the civil service at that point in time. To achieve Sarawak's vision to be a world class civil

service, a 10 action plan was formulated by the leaders leading the transformation agenda. The transformation agenda is anchored with the tagline 'An honour to serve' to make people believe that being a civil servant is the greatest opportunity for them to serve mankind. According to YB Tan Sri, salary and positions should be second to the noble cause of serving the people that civil servants should first believe in. Through shared values like integrity, kindness and caring, sense of urgency and team spirit, managing culture change is easier. Besides, high performance team solutions and key focus activities helps a lot in breaking the different silos in the workplace by pushing civil servants to find better solutions together.

According to YB Tan Sri Datuk Amar Haji Mohamad Morshidi, besides a value-based leadership, talent management is also crucial given civil servants are the ones driving change. In Sarawak's case, prospective civil servants would have to go through 5 different phases which is the qualification, competency, assessments centre, structured interview and the psychometric tests. Given the overwhelming number of applicants each year, a stringent process is a must to get the crème de le crème into the civil service. To get promoted, civil servants would have to go through the same process to ensure that they have the relevant competencies for the given position. A tali-khidmat was developed known as the Integrated Multi Service Counter for customers to provide feedbacks as well as complaints regarding a certain service in order to ensure satisfactory customer service. State Service Quality Award, on the other hand, is given to excellent civil servants to motivate them to perform better. Scorecards are given in each areas of customer satisfaction, finance and processes as a performance management tool to ensure that the quality of service is kept in place.

In terms of investment, the guest speaker believes in what he deems as investment that would benefit Sarawak and its people, by bringing in the industries into Sarawak. He believes that investments that benefit Sarawak and its people would also benefit Malaysia at large. YB Tan Sri Datuk Amar Haji Mohamad Morshidi also believes that Sarawak is an investment haven for investors given its political and economic stability, English-speaking and trainable workforce, natural resources, good infrastructures like airports as well as huge energy potentials etc. which are all opportunities that should be tapped into. Though Sarawak's transformation is a painful journey, YB believes that Sarawak is able to drive its own change through the autonomy it has. In a nutshell, Sarawak is in a league of its own when state administration and transformation is concerned. Indeed, there is another way of doing things.

Issues raised

- Besides instilling good values through value-based leadership, creating a happy and fun work environment is also crucial. In order to create a happy and fun working environment, we have to look at people as assets. This must work both ways between the employers and the employees.

- In terms of infrastructure, there is more that can be done in Sarawak. Despite the lack of quality of some roads in Sarawak, it is still an improvement compared to previous roads. Roads and other infrastructures are important in that connectivity brings people together while bringing efficiency to many things.
- In regards to the community development projects, not all developments are being supported by the community in Sarawak. It is therefore best to know the local community want through engagements and explanations. Through good engagements and explanations, some middle ground is able to be achieved. It is indeed a challenge to balance development and the wants of the local community.
- Sacrifice is a part of being an excellent civil servant. When the guest of honour went into the civil service, he was already paid higher at another leading company. Hence, he had to sacrifice his salary in order to serve the rakyat.
- Urban and rural divide defines a lot in terms of education, level of sophistication, level of expectations and the channel of communications in Sarawak. For instance, despite the minimum infrastructures in rural areas, many still support the government where as many urbanites would not. Hence, both the rural and the urban population have to be treated differently. Though there are lesser and lesser divide now, the government will have to keep up with the challenges in managing this urban and rural divide or will become irrelevant in the future.
- If we have zero corruption, it can be said that we are world class. Singapore is world class in some ways though with a lot of enforcements. Hence, achieving a certain standard and being good in every aspect for the guest speaker is good enough. We should not stop improving in the direction towards becoming world class.
- Transformation journey is a painful journey and we must have all the energy to go through this journey. The challenge is to get people to understand why

transformation is crucial and what it would mean to the people and the rakyat. Along the way, however, people complain about a lot of things and you will have to be patient enough to listen to them. Engagements with the local community as well as the ministers and politicians is therefore a must in order to succeed. It is indeed a challenge and if 80% of the people are on board, it is considered good enough.

About the Speaker

YB Tan Sri Datuk Amar Haji Mohamad Morshidi Abdul Ghani was appointed the State Secretary of Sarawak on 3 August 2009. He started his career in 1980 as Management Executive with Petronas. In 1988, he joined the Sarawak Civil Service. His first appointment was as the Director of Kuching North City Hall. He has been entrusted with many important responsibilities such as the Director for Human Resources Management (Chief Minister's Department), Director, Human Resource Development & Quality (Chief Minister's Department), Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Social Development and Urbanisation and the Director, State Planning Unit (Chief Minister's Department). He also sits on many boards and committees at both state and national level. YB Tan Sri holds a Master of Science in Human Resource Administration and Bachelor in Economics from University of Scranton, USA and University Kebangsaan Malaysia respectively. He completed a course in Senior Executive Fellows from Harvard University, US in 2006.

Contact

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