

RSOG SEMINAR

ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint Impact to the Public Service in Malaysia

with

Professor Dr. Kamaruddin Mohd Said

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Speakers : Professor Dr. Kamaruddin Mohd Said

About the Seminar

In achieving any goal, there must be a plan and a sequence of actions towards that end. In realising the ASEAN Community, there is a roadmap that forms the basis of ASEAN Community. Within it lies three Blueprints – Economic (AEC), Political-Security (APSC), and Socio-Cultural (ASCC). It can be inferred that AEC and APSC have caught most of the public's attention during Malaysia's chairmanship considering that the issues surrounds market production, economic growth, and peace and harmony. The ASCC, despite shouldering issues radiating the men in the street, are less discussed and perhaps are not fully understood. With key focus areas on human development, social welfare and protection, social justice and rights, environmental sustainability, narrowing development gap, and building ASEAN identity, there are many areas which directly and indirectly impacts the Malaysian policymakers in converging national targets with regional expectations. Considering that one of the main agenda of the ASCC Community is building an effective governance framework and coordination mechanism, how does the Malaysian Public Service mobilise its resources toward that end. What is needed to realise it, and more importantly, what kind of impact will it have on the Public Service in Malaysia, in the process and upon its attainment? These are some of the issues to be explored in depth in this seminar.

Summary

ASEAN, which was formed on 8 August 1967 as a geo-political and economic organisation witnessed a very important milestone at the 27th Summit in Kuala Lumpur last year. ASEAN is embarking on a new phase of community building and community strengthening through the ASEAN Charter – One Vision, One Identity and One Community - an important step forward. ASEAN needs to build a stronger institutional strength. A deepening integration means a larger and effective voice collectively. Besides moving to become a stronger economic entity, ASEAN needs to be more people-centred and stay united as a large community. The ASEAN principles of non-interference and consensus decision-making, combined with the problematic emphasis on regional particularities has resulted in ASEAN still finding its way to come together and build its own identity. Interestingly, ASEAN does not impose any punishment for members that do not participate because again each country does not interfere in each other's policies and laws.

The global crisis today has an immediate effect on ASEAN. Therefore, ASEAN integration is imperative, and no longer an alternative of improving things. For many years, ASEAN has been struggling to resolve the various requirements of each country that are too diverse to bind as an integrated union.

In order to make this happen, a stronger political will is needed. The commitment requires regional integration. Therefore, the next ASCC Blueprint (2016-2025) was realised, providing a path to ASEAN Community 2025. The scope of the ASCC covers the environment, disaster management, education, information, culture, health, sports, youth, women, children, manpower, rural development, poverty eradication, social welfare and civil service training. This blueprint is expected to continue to build an ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community that is inclusive, sustainable, resilient, dynamic, engaging and benefits its people.

The ASCC Council is accountable for the overall implementation of the ASCC Blueprint and ensure coordination of efforts, including across the other Communities. The ASEAN Secretariat (ASEC) has been tasked to monitor and review the implementation of the ASCC Blueprint, and for this purpose shall develop and adopt indicators and systems. The ASCC Blueprint also calls for a mid-term review, taking into account the changing dynamics of the region and the global environment. The new blueprint will impact the community as a whole, including the public officers who will continue to receive continuous capacity building training programmes in trying to provide the best services to the *rakyat*.

What we need to do now is to plan strategies that addresses the drivers of regional cooperation and commit to the necessary, which would result in timely action to reform policies and processes. Also, binding measures are needed to implement effective regional cooperation. This requires commitment from various ministries especially those that fall under the social sector.

The non-uniformed policies between the ASEAN members calls for transformation. The possibility of reorganisation of ministries portfolios and the need to revisit ancient bureaucratic procedures or acts is even more needed and our role is to better understand the new element of laws and regulations in harmony to the need of ASEAN. During this process, we will face some resistance, either from the participating countries or our people but we have the *ASEAN Way* of doing things and we will prosper eventually. The goal of building an inclusive community is not a far-fetched idea after all, it is possible if we transform for a better future now.

Issues raised

1. ASEAN seems to take a relatively longer time to integrate, as there is lack of push in community building as well as identity that binds member countries together.
2. In the context of public sector, the public officers must realign and strategize their work plan to suit the Blueprint accordingly. They need to analyse the current policies and certain laws. For example, in tackling the haze issue which has impacted Malaysia, Indonesia and

Singapore recently, it is very important to work cross sectoral to resolve environmental issues at regional level.

3. The strength of public sector lies behind the complex structure of how the whole system was built. Because of that, the public officers are good in understanding the rules and regulations of various circulars, the principles behind every policy and the best way to make decisions for public interest before their own.
4. Having knowledge alone is not sufficient to stay relevant. Public officers must understand the rule of the game as it will change the nature of doing business and affect diplomatic ties. The implication of our non-intervention policy means that we have to agree to disagree in maintaining good ties.
5. Generally, the game is about understating events happening in the leading nations that may have significant impact on Malaysia.
6. The ASEAN Way follows the basic principles of negotiation where respective member countries must find common ground in reaching a sound decision.

About the Speaker

Professor Dr. Kamaruddin Mohd Said is currently the Assistant Vice Chancellor of University of Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA), Terengganu. With a doctorate in anthropology from University of California, he has taught at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Asia-Europe Institute at University of Malaya, and Tsakuba University of Japan. In addition to numerous publications (journals and books), he is actively involved in professional associations, currently heading the Indonesian-Malaysian Professorial Association, Head of Cluster – History, Heritage and Socio-Culture at the Professorial Council of Malaysia and is also the Visiting Fellow at RSOG. He was instrumental in the research conducted by RSOG on “Kajian Profil Perkhidmatan Awam” in 2012-2013.

Contact

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