

# **RSOG LEADERSHIP FORUM**

## **Leading Scientifically – My Story**

with

**Professor Dr. Abdul Latif Ahmad**

**When** : 29 August 2016  
**Where** : Razak School of Government  
**Speakers** : Professor Dr. Abdul Latif Ahmad

### **About the Seminar**

*“Art is I; science is we”*. Looking at what science have achieved for mankind, the statement made by a prominent physiologist more than a century ago holds a lot of truth. The wonder of science is also associated with precision, teamwork, humility, dedication, and perseverance. It’s little wonder why half of the Nobel prizes are dedicated to science. Having said all the above, the journey of the great minds in science is hardly discussed, especially in this part of the world. For instance, how does scientists actually think, lead, speak, and act? What makes them persevere and be persistent? This Leadership Forum intends to explore from Professor Dr. Abdul Latif Ahmad, who has dedicated over 20 years of his life to intensive and in-depth research endeavors on preserving the environment. He is noted for his struggle in promoting collaborative engagements to disseminate membrane technology to the bottom billion for a better future.

### **Summary**

Every person has his or her own unique experience and background that shapes and develops their personality and what he or she is today. Professor Dr. Abdul Latif Ahmad is no exception. He emphasised the importance of our upbringing that develops and builds our character and personality to become who we are today. He narrated his humble beginnings and how his success is attributed to hard work and sheer determination. Although he has won numerous awards and accolades for his research work, he remains humble and down to earth because he is a firm believer in upholding his values and principles.

As a successful scientist, he believes in giving his full commitment to his research work and being accountable for his actions. He stressed that the success of a scientist or researcher is measured when they have produced a work that has contributed to the betterment and benefit of the people and nation. It is crucial for a scientist to produce a work that is different and has an impact in other countries as well. In this regard, the recognition given adds value to the credibility and quality of a research.

He described the qualities and competencies required for him to be a successful scientist. He mentioned that his road to success is attributed to his role as a successful researcher, capable

manager, good mentor and great leader. A **successful researcher** should be equipped with the necessary skills such as being a quick thinker, committed to the work, calm, systematic in planning and managing, intelligent and possess critical thinking.

He added that to be a **capable manager**, one has to possess certain characteristics such as being assertive, a problem solver, accountable for his/her actions, give constructive feedback, confident, transparent in decision-making, good listener, respectful to others and other positive attributes.

According to Professor Dr. Abdul Latif Ahmad, to be a **great leader**, a person has to have certain inherent qualities such as being inspiring, displaying a sense of being calm and composed, empathetic, delegator, humorous and empowered.

A **good mentor** is someone who is seen as a role model by their subordinates, respectful to all, knowledgeable, engaging, compassionate, a good listener, supportive, and able to motivate others to achieve success.

He also spoke about the Blue Ocean Strategy concept as a way of encouraging competitiveness by producing the best possible output that will create an impact for the nation and society.

In concluding his remarks, he stressed the importance of hard work as a motivating tool for him to achieve success in life. As a scientist, he spoke about his aspirations to amass a wealth of knowledge, mentor young researchers and academicians, to be a sought after consultant, commercialize research products and to become a successful entrepreneur. His parting words of wisdom are *“Whatever we do, make sure that it is of importance and has an impact”*.

### **Key Issues Raised**

1. A person should always strive their best by multitasking and maximising the opportunities presented to them. In this regard, it is important to leverage on the skills and knowledge training available through effective time management.
2. Online scholarly materials have proven to be a reliable source for researchers to manage information effectively as they are able to sieve through data and facts to prioritise the information relevant to a particular research.
3. Malaysia is still lagging in terms of producing our very own creator and innovator for inventions like Facebook or Google. One of the reasons is because the culture and environment to develop and nurture innovative and creative minds is discouraged by the quick gain syndrome where an investor is looking for quick returns instead of encouraging an idea to blossom and develop into a phenomenon.
4. In the field of science, success is measured when a discovery or a breakthrough in research has benefited the nation and has contributed to the improvement of the life of the people.

5. A person should be motivated by their self-awareness to work hard and achieve success in life. Self-awareness is very much influenced by our upbringing, environment and life experiences.

### **About the Speaker**

Professor Dr. Abdul Latif Ahmad was the Merdeka Award winner in 2014 for outstanding contribution to the scholarly research and development of technologies. He obtained his B.Eng. in Chemical Engineering from the University of Wales, Swansea, United Kingdom. This was followed by a MSc. in Chemical Engineering and, subsequently, a Ph.D in Chemical Engineering (with a focus on Membrane Technology) from the University of Wales. He is currently a Professor at Universiti Sains Malaysia's School of Chemical Engineering. In June 2014, Thomson Reuters named Professor Dr. Latif among the World's Highly Cited Researchers by awarding him "The World's Most Influential Scientific Minds: 2014".

### **Contact**

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