

RSOG SEMINAR

Diverse and Unique: Stories from Papua New Guinea

with

His Excellency Mr. Peter Vincent

When : 9 November 2016
Where : Razak School of Government
Speakers : His Excellency Mr. Peter Vincent

About the Seminar

Malaysia has long been associated with diversity such as its people, culture, and ecology. As repeatedly echoed by many, diversity offers both strengths and challenges. Perhaps the balance is in how the nation manages them. The Malay proverb once said “berat mata memandang, berat lagi bahu yang memikul” (hard for eyes to see, harder for shoulders that carry). Approximately 5,240 kilometers south-east of Malaysia lies a beautiful nation called Papua New Guinea whom coincidentally declared its independence on 16 September 1975 (the same date Malaysia was born in 1963). Papua New Guinea has a diversity that probably is the most unique in this world – more than a thousand cultural groups and 852 languages spoken. More than 80 percent of their seven million population are scattered all over the 462,840km² wide (132,037km² more than Malaysia) country. Having said all the above, this nation is yet to be discovered in many ways. This seminar will amongst others share the experience of Papua New Guinea in managing diversity and their plans moving forward in light of the changing times, both globally and regionally.

Summary

This was a very interesting session as the participants learnt more about this country which is relatively unknown in this region and their unique culture and heritage from the High Commissioner himself. The seminar was an opportunity for Malaysia and Papua New Guinea to highlight the similarities between both the countries especially in the context of racial diversity, thriving tourism industry and common natural resources particularly the palm oil industry. H.E. Vincent also provided key facts and figures regarding the trade and investment of Papua New Guinea. He acknowledged that the diplomatic relations between Malaysia and Papua New Guinea has been established since 1975 and will continue to be strengthened in tandem with the expanding bilateral relations between both countries. He added that Papua New Guinea will benefit from the growing ties with Malaysia, noting that people to people connections were also getting stronger. This session served as a platform for the participants to seek more information on Papua New Guinea and to better understand the challenges that

the country faces to accommodate different needs of the people and to ensure that the wellbeing of all citizens are taken care of.

Key Issues Raised

- One of the important ways of how a culturally rich Papua New Guinea promotes unity is through their education system. The main teaching language is English although other languages are encouraged to be spoken especially in primary school level.
- A Master Blueprint is formulated to address the various issues of integration and national unity in order to ensure that all programmes and policies implemented by the government benefits the people.
- In Papua New Guinea, the religious institutions particularly the Churches play a vital role as a symbol of unity and as a mediator in resolving conflicts between different communities.
- With rapid development taking place, the government is committed in ensuring that the diverse culture and heritage of the country is not threatened in any way and will be preserved for generations to come.
- The natural landscape of Papua New Guinea poses a challenge for the government to reach out and disseminate information on programmes and policies to the communities living in the remotest part of the country.
- One of the challenges faced by the lawmakers of Papua New Guinea is to convince the people regarding the benefits of the progress and development taking place in the country as the majority of the people are still resistant to change.
- The government of Papua New Guinea is working on a single identification system for their citizens as part of their continuous effort to improve public service delivery.

- Although known as a unique country for its amazing diversity, Papua New Guinea has its own set of challenges to ensure that their citizens enjoy the benefits from the rapid socio-economic development taking place in the country.

About the Speaker

H.E. Peter Vincent was appointed as the High Commissioner of Papua New Guinea to Malaysia in July 2016. Formerly, he was the Chief Executive Officer of Papua New Guinea Tourism Promotion Authority, a position that he held since 2003. He received his education in Papua New Guinea and has attended numerous advanced management programmes abroad throughout his illustrious career primarily in aviation and tourism.

Contact

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