

Sarawak Civil Service
Administration and Development:

Reflections *and* Reminiscences *over*

60 YEARS



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Sarawak Development Institute (SDI)

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FOREWORD

The civil service administration of Sarawak has played a pivotal role in shaping the history and development of the nation over the past six decades. The dedication, hard work, and commitment of our civil service staff have been crucial in transforming Sarawak into an economically progressive, and harmonious society.

The stories of retired civil service staff in this book, some of whom have left us in this world, serve as a testament to their unwavering commitment to serving the people of Sarawak. Their contributions have paved the way for Sarawak to achieve great strides in peace, stability, and economic development.

The unity, harmony, and stability that these retired civil servants have helped to cultivate and, which we now enjoy in Sarawak, inspire and motivate Sarawakians to pursue ground breaking economic development goals today. With a cohesive and stable society, the people are able to focus their energies on achieving progress without being hindered by unnecessary conflicts. The stability and unity we have built and strengthened over the last 60 years are now the solid foundation for sustainable economic growth and development, ensuring a bright future for the people of Sarawak.

It is important to recognize the invaluable role of our civil service in building a united and prosperous society. The dedication and sacrifices of past civil service staff have laid a strong foundation for the future generations to continue the tradition of honourable and dedicated service.

It is my hope that this book will inspire current and future civil servants to uphold the principles of commitment and dedication in serving the people of Sarawak. I am confident that when they remain faithful to the ethos of “An Honour to Serve”, the civil service of Sarawak will continue to play a vital role in shaping the nation’s future of being an economic powerhouse and an enduring model of peace, unity and harmony and social inclusivity.



YAB Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri (Dr) Abang Haji Abdul Rahman Zohari

Bin Tun Datuk Abang Haji Openg

Premier of Sarawak

MESSAGE

It is clearly evident that the role of the civil service in the development of our nation cannot be overstated. The account of the changes that Sarawak has undergone over the last 60 years, and the stories recounted by former civil servants are a testament to the pivotal role that the Sarawak civil service institution plays in the development of our nation.

The inspiring accounts of the challenges faced and overcome by those who came before us serve as a reminder of the importance of our role in shaping the future of our nation. As the catalysts for positive change and the stabilizing force through the changes that our nation goes through, it is our duty to uphold the values of dedication, discipline, and hard work that our predecessors have instilled within us.

We are fortunate to inherit a strong and stable civil service institution that has paved the way for our successes today. The sacrifices and dedication of our predecessors have laid the foundation upon which we now stand, allowing us to carry out our duties with ease and efficiency thanks to modern technologies and established systems.

Our task now is to build upon these foundations, continuously improving and upgrading our processes to meet the ever-evolving needs of our society. However, amidst the changes and advancements, we must never lose sight of the core ethos that defines us as civil servants - the belief that it is an honour to serve.

It is this commitment to service that sets us apart and ensures that we remain relevant in the lives of the people we serve. By staying true to this creed, we can uphold the legacy of those who came before us and inspire those who will follow in our footsteps.

May the stories shared within these pages ignite a renewed sense of dedication and passion for service within us all. Let us strive to uphold the ethos of “an honour to serve” in all that we do, so that we may continue to make a positive impact on the lives of those we serve and inspire future generations of civil servants to do the same. The stories we would tell 10, 20, 60, 100 years down the line as we face differing challenges and situations would certainly be different but let the common thread of our stories remain the same - that it is “an honour to serve”.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Amar".

YB Datuk Amar Haji Mohamad Abu Bakar Bin Marzuki
Sarawak State Secretary

MESSAGE

The Sarawak civil service has always been a cornerstone in the development of Sarawak. It functions as the bridge between the people and the government, giving a face to the bureaucracy of government. Civil servants, in serving as change agents and catalysts for development, must place emphasis on the people or citizens as the key beneficiary of any development effort. While changes take place continuously in the economic, social and political landscapes of any nation, its people remain a constant, requiring the civil service to be adept with the right leadership and skills to deal with them and their expectations. People thus matters, and need to be understood by the civil service bureaucracy that delivers services for their development.

This publication gives a glimpse into how civil service officers have played their roles through the years to bring development and services to the people. Their stories and experiences provide an insightful look into the formative years of the Sarawak civil service. I sincerely hope that by reflecting on the challenges and hardships of the past, the new generation of civil servants would be able to appreciate the sacrifices made and are needed, and continue to emulate the spirit of selflessness in their service to the people of Sarawak. The civil service today is a capable, multiracial institution that has helped Sarawak step into the 21st century. This publication is thus a homage to all the individuals in the Sarawak civil service, many of whom we could not include, and some of whom who are no longer with us, who have and had been instrumental in Sarawak's development, peace and harmony.

I wish to record my appreciation and gratitude to the distinguished individuals featured in this book who have laid the foundation and built up the Sarawak civil service into what it is today. I would also like to thank YBhg. Tan Sri Datuk Amar Haji Mohamad Morshidi Bin Abdul Ghani for mooted this book project, and the General Administration Unit (UP), Department of the Premier of Sarawak for the financial support in making this publication a reality. My appreciation also goes to the Editorial Committee which comprises Datu William Patrick Nyigor, Datu Dr Hatta Solhi, and Dr Peter Kedit for overseeing this book project. Many thanks also to the writers and editors at Faradale Media-M Sdn. Bhd, as well as the Secretariat at SDI.

I wish you all an enjoyable read.



Datuk Amar Jaul Samion

*Chairman
Sarawak Development Institute*



PREFACE

The civil service institution has a long and storied history dating back to ancient civilizations. The concept of a professional bureaucracy to serve and administer the government has evolved over time, with different systems and structures emerging in various cultures and societies.

The civil service as we know it today can be traced back to the reforms of the British government in the 19th century. The British civil service was established as a professional and autonomous institution, with entry based on competitive examinations rather than patronage. This system served as a model for many other countries, including the United States, which adopted a similar merit-based system for its civil service in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The civil service institution continued to evolve, with many countries expanding and modernizing their civil service systems to meet the changing needs of government administration. This included the development of new recruitment and training methods, as well as the establishment of independent agencies to oversee and regulate the civil service.

Today, the civil service institution plays a crucial role in the effective functioning of governments around the world, providing the expertise, stability and continuity necessary for the implementation of public policies and the delivery of services to citizens. Despite its long history, the civil service continues to adapt and change in response to new challenges and opportunities.

Such is the case for the Sarawak Civil Service (SCS). It has continued to evolve since the time when Sarawak was under the rule of Rajah James Brooke in 1841. During his rule of Sarawak, Rajah James Brooke modelled the administrative system he set up from the examples of the neighbouring British colonies. This was continued under the rule of his successors- Rajah Charles Brooke (1868 - 1917), followed by Rajah Vyner Brooke (1917 - 1946).

After the cession of Sarawak in July 1946, when it became a colony of the United Kingdom, it was found necessary to institute changes in the administrative system of the new colony. The colonial Administrative Service consisted of two divisions, the Secretariat and District branches. The centre of administration was the Secretariat and most young officers, referred to as Cadet, were given initial training in district administration at the Secretariat and thereafter were assigned to serve in far-flung outstation district offices. The training a Cadet received varied according to the district to which he was posted and the temperament of his senior colonial officer.

Shortly after it gained self-governance on 22nd July 1963, Sarawak, together with the Federation of Malaya (later known as Peninsular Malaysia), Singapore and British North Borneo (later known as Sabah), formed the Federation of Malaysia which was inaugurated on 16th September 1963. As an independent nation within the Federation of Malaysia, the Sarawak administrative system went through periods of restructuring exercises aimed at improving productivity, increasing efficiency, and enhancing development management orientation and capacity.

This book tells the stories and experiences of the civil servants who went through these changes in Sarawak's administrative system over the last 60 years of Sarawak's independence within the Federation of Malaysia. Primarily the Sarawak Civil Service (SCS) have had to ensure a smooth transition and continuity of service through the different political and administrative landscapes over the last six decades. This required effective planning and implementation of change management strategies. From the personal accounts of these civil servants, readers will have a glimpse of how the Sarawak civil servants navigated and effected significant changes that demonstrated the crucial role that they played as agents of change for Sarawak's development and progress.

Part 1

Sarawak Civil Service: Growing from Strength to Strength *As Change Agents*

Being a change agent for the nation's development and progress is a position of immense importance, requiring individuals to possess certain qualities and undertake specific responsibilities to drive positive transformations within a nation. As catalysts for progress and development, these change agents strive to shape their societies by addressing pressing issues, promoting inclusivity, and empowering communities.

This was the role and responsibility that the Sarawak Civil Service (SCS) played over the last 60 years. Judging from the challenges that the SCS surmounted through these 60 years, it has effectively fulfilled that role. Today, as Sarawak aspires to become a leading nation in a world order that grapples with digital disruptions, and pressing issues of climate change, social inclusiveness and good governance, it is well-positioned and well-equipped to continue to play the role of a catalyst for a

more progressive, socially inclusive and well-governed Sarawak in the years ahead.

As change agents, the civil servants of Sarawak had, time and again, found themselves challenging the status quo and breaking away from deeply entrenched systems and norms. These changes were met with resistance, setbacks, and even hostility. But applying resilience and perseverance, they remained steadfast in their commitment to Sarawak's greater good, adapting their strategies and decisions to meet the challenges while staying true to their vision. Their determination served as an inspiration for others, sparking a ripple effect of change that transformed Sarawak's communities and landscapes through the years.

The Early Years of Sarawak's Civil Service

60 years ago, Sarawak was relatively underdeveloped – physically, economically and politically. Sarawak had one thing going for it though in spite of its relative lack of development. Its Administrative Service was well-preserved and helped ensure Sarawak's smooth transition from being a colonial entity of the British government to that of an independent state within Malaysia.

When it was established in the 1950s, the Sarawak Administrative Service operated in tandem with the Native Administrative Service which had its origins during the Brooke era¹. Officers in both services had the same functions and goals, with the only difference being their method of recruitment. Where the Native Officers were appointed because of their family background and influence, the Administrative Officers had to possess minimum academic qualifications.

During the Japanese occupation years from 1941 to 1945, Sarawak was placed under the Japanese Military Administration. It is interesting to note that the Japanese more or less continued with the administrative set-up introduced during the Brooke period. They replaced the European Residents and officers with Japanese military officials but they retained the Native Officers.

When the Japanese occupation ended, Vyner Brooke needed help rebuilding Sarawak and initiated the idea of Sarawak becoming a British colony. After some debate, a Bill of Cession was passed by the Council Negri² and on 1st July 1946, Sarawak became a British Crown Colony.

The colonial rule lasted for only 17 years. But in this short time, the administrative organisation of Sarawak underwent more changes than during a century under the Rajahs.

Instead of the Rajah, the head of state was now King George VI and later, Queen Elizabeth II. To represent the British monarch, a Governor of Sarawak was appointed. As a colony, the Administrative Service, now headed by the Chief Secretary, saw the entry of Colonial Officers from the United Kingdom. Reporting to the Chief Secretary was the Resident who in turn was responsible for the District Officers within his Division. Capable locals were not side-stepped and a number of deserving local administrative officers saw themselves promoted as District Officers.

With a more defined structure in the civil service came greater centralisation, and important decisions had to be referred to the Colonial Office in London. Overall, the civil service under the Crown was more efficient than during the Brooke era. A systematic policy of development was undertaken, with public works projects to improve conditions in the rural areas given specific attention. There was provision for the training of teachers, agricultural development, stamping out malaria, and the establishment of dispensaries in the upriver regions.

For the first time, written legislation was also introduced. Some of the laws gave substantial powers to the Residents and District Officers. They were granted more privileges and in many cases, had direct authority and responsibility in their respective areas of jurisdiction.

Indeed, the District Office became the spine of the government and the hub of district administration. And for the people of Sarawak, the District Officer, or DO, was the very symbol of government. He was responsible for all government departments in his district such as the treasury, revenue collection and public health. The District Office also handled immigration, customs, registration of births and deaths, marine matters, the functions of the Post and Telegraph Office and even court cases. It registered marriages, and dealt with divorces. To fulfil these functions, the District Officer was expected to be knowledgeable on local and traditional ethnic laws and customs prevailing in his district.

Enhancing the District Officer's clout was the establishment of local councils for each district; they were responsible for matters such as education, medical and health services and infrastructure development for their own district. They built schools, roads, hospitals and provided a better range of health facilities. Council members, also known as councillors, were elected (thus marking the start of democracy in Sarawak), and automatically presiding over the councils as chairman was the District Officer. The first such council to be created was the Kuching Municipal Council in 1953. The setting up of local councils was similar to a practice adopted in Malaya with which Sarawak was to form a federation with British North Borneo and Singapore in 1963.

Sarawak was fortunate in that the Colonial Office understood that it could not hold on to power forever in the colony and that, sooner or later, when the

country attained independence, the colonists would have to leave and hand over the reigns of administration to the local populace, facilitating Sarawak's transition from a colonial entity to an independent nation.

“Borneonisation” Process

When the Federation of Malaysia³ was formed on 16th September 1963, the **“Borneonisation”** of the Sarawak Civil Service (SCS) commenced. A step at a time was taken, starting from the lower level, to gradually replace each category of expatriate personnel with qualified local officers.

The Public Service Commission (PSC), which oversaw appointments in the civil service and scholarship matters, among other things, and a Civil Service Training Branch, were created.

The Administrative Service was open to all and no preference was given to any particular ethnic group in the recruitment process. Minimum educational qualifications were set for the various echelons of the civil service. Graduates were brought in as recruits for the top level, known as Class I, and they could aspire to hold the top job in the land – that of State Secretary.

The 1960s also saw a further improvement in the provision of training. Department heads were asked to identify suitable positions for localisation as well as suitable candidates for training overseas. Deserving Administrative Officers were sent on scholarships to England, Canada, Australia or New Zealand under the Colombo Plan to study. Apart from equipping them with the right skills to improve service standards when they returned, their stay abroad also helped to widen the officers' outlook and enabled them to keep abreast of new challenges brought about by an increasingly complex and sophisticated civil service.

One major hurdle that the SCS faced in the early days of Borneonisation was recruiting suitable and qualified staff willing to serve in remote areas – most of which were far-flung and lacked creature comforts.

An entry in one of the issues of the Sarawak Gazette⁴ stated that: *“Now with the advent of Malaysia, the expatriates will quickly disappear and must be replaced by local men. Yet, here lies the difficulty, for it is easier to get a man from London to live in Kapit, than to find one of similar qualifications in Sibu,*

who is willing to do so... It is a melancholy fact that the higher a Sarawak boy's qualifications, the greater the difficulty of getting him away from his family... It is easy to hire specialists to discharge specialist functions but when it comes to self-government, for it to have any meaning at all, the task of upcountry administration, must be discharged by the people themselves”.

This concern proved to be unfounded. The young elites of Sarawak proved to have in them the twin ideals of **“adventure and service”**. The civil servants of that time proved equal to the challenges and showed willingness and dedication to serve no matter the difficulties, harsh conditions and threatening challenges they had to face.

Peacemaking and Forging Unity

Sarawak witnessed a number of important changes in the early years of its independence within Malaysia. The first was the division of services between the State and the Federal Governments. The second was the emphasis on economic and rural development, which led to the establishment of Statutory Boards. Sarawak also adopted a ministerial system of government.

The early years of independence saw more than just these changes on the administrative scene. From a fairly placid situation of maintaining law and order in the respective communities they were assigned, civil servants in Sarawak found themselves caught up in turbulent times in the 1960s.

From 1962 to 1966, they had to deal with the problems of “Confrontation”, brought about by Indonesia’s President Sukarno, who had opposed the formation of Malaysia. These led to skirmishes along Indonesia’s Kalimantan border shared with Sarawak. Apart from these security threats, Sarawak also faced an insurgency from the State’s own Clandestine Communist Organisation (CCO).

The District Officers and their team of civil servants found themselves thrust into the heart of the conflict. They were faced with the daunting task of dealing with security threats and to navigate these treacherous waters, the civil servants realised they had to equip themselves with a different set of skills. They became soldiers of peace, and warriors for unity as they engaged in what became known as “psywar”.

They were now charged with conducting psychological warfare on behalf of the government, fighting not with guns, but with the power of persuasion. The challenge before them was immense, as they embarked on a delicate journey to win the hearts and minds of the people.

The so-called “psywar” saw the civil service going all out to win over the population through various means. Armed forces engaged in the struggle against Indonesian forces and Communist elements were told to do good deeds to retain the support of the people. People were persuaded not to provide food or refuge for the enemy. Civil servants worked hard in doing “gotong royong” activities to help the rural communities, outside of the usual administrative tasks that they were tasked to do.

Although Confrontation had its tense and traumatic moments, it had its upside, since it helped to unite the people against a common enemy and it gave time for Sarawak to find its footing in its relationship with the Federal government.

As for the fight against Communist elements, the establishment of RASCOM (Rajang Security Command) on 26th March 1972 enabled policies and decisions to be made and implemented swiftly and efficiently. The Command was placed under the direct administration of the Chief Minister as the State Director of Operations, assisted by joint Civil, Military and Police forces.

Before RASCOM was set up, the Communist terror was pronounced, especially in some Divisions. Some 500 armed militants were terrorising and killing civilians when the latter refused to render assistance to the Communists or were suspected of collaborating with security forces. RASCOM carried out successful offensive operations against the terrorists in the Communist-infiltrated areas and instituted various measures such as round-the-clock curfews.

In some areas, the Communist terrorist actions forced people to move from their settlements to safer ground in search of security protection. Most of the people would move to places near Area Security Unit (ASU) posts operated by RASCOM. Apart from receiving protection, the people were also assisted by RASCOM in resettlement programmes. They were given materials and help in building longhouses and land to cultivate rice, pepper and other crops. In their new homes, the people were soon able to live again in peace. RASCOM

was thus able to garner support from the people and rally them behind the Government.

With the successful government-introduced Tenant Registration and Food Denial programmes, the insurgents found survival difficult as they lacked support from the people who would also report their presence if they were detected. In time to come, the Communist threat petered out. A major victory was achieved on 21st October 1973 with the launching of Operation Sri Aman, which saw the surrender of 264 Communist insurgents. Many of their comrades had been killed earlier while the rest - 132 of them - retreated into the jungles.

The scars of conflict began to fade as forgiveness and reconciliation took their place, laying the foundation for a stronger, more united Sarawak. The efforts of Sarawak's civil servants, who played the role of peacemakers, had not been in vain; they had played an integral role in forging a path towards lasting unity. They had proven that, even in the face of adversity, peace could be restored, and a better future could be built.

With the threat of Confrontation and Communism squashed, the Sarawak government continued with its efforts to foster unity without which development programmes would not have been able to proceed. The responsibility of implementing this policy fell on the civil service. The civil servants used their positions as conduits of change to embed the value of unity among the people, strengthening the peace that had been momentarily shattered and helping the people embrace their diversity with pride.

To carry this out, the SCS implemented programmes, projects and events that were aimed at strengthening unity and enhancing harmony among Sarawak's multi-ethnic population. Measures such as setting up Goodwill Committees chaired by District Officers, were established. These committees were tasked to cultivate good relations among all ethnic groups. Agencies, such as the Information Department, focused on creating awareness of the tenets of RUKUN NEGARA⁵, which articulated the guiding principles for all Malaysians.

The Sarawak government also encouraged and supported ethnic and cultural groups in Sarawak, giving equal attention to everyone. The support came in the form of lands and building funds for their respective headquarters as well as administrative and financial support in the organisation of ethnic festivals.

These were seen as a means of creating awareness and appreciation of the rich heritage and the roles and contributions of Sarawak's multi-racial population to nation-building.

Another major example of initiatives to foster unity and harmony would be the Sarawak Cultural Symposium series, which was first organised in 1988. Thereafter organised every five years, the Sarawak Cultural Symposium series gave Sarawak's multi-racial population a platform to be equally heard as they voice their aspirations and concerns. These became important inputs in the development planning process of the Sarawak government.

A Paradigm Shift from Administrators to Development Managers

Compared to the period when Sarawak was under the rule of the Rajahs and during the colonial administration, Sarawak saw a relatively rapid pace of development after the formation of Malaysia. The main thrust of development efforts focused on economic, rural and social development. New roads, schools and health facilities were built and more land was made available for infrastructure development. The emphasis on development was not restricted to public works. Various policies were adopted on matters such as industries, agriculture development and services; to help carry them out, administrative and financial mechanisms were put in place at the same time.

The implementation of all these programmes resulted in a significant change in the posting of District Officers. To equip them with the knowledge and skills to carry out the programmes that would meet the development goals of Sarawak, District Officers were required to remain at least three years on the job. This would enable them to acquire the in-depth knowledge necessary to carry out their work. This was a major shift from the previous practice, adopted in the 1960s and 70s, of moving administrators from one job to another, which had the effect of developing "generalists" among civil service staff.

With the advent of globalisation in the 80s and 90s, the pursuit of economic development was an urgent priority for the Sarawak government. In a developing country like Malaysia, the government has to play an active role in facilitating and managing the growth of economic sectors and industries. In

this role, it must have the capacity to manage the assets and liabilities of the nation, and it must be able to work with the private sector in development.

This required a major paradigm shift in the way the civil servants carried out their roles, tasks and functions. As the implementing arm of the government, the Sarawak civil service has to formulate specific policies and carry out programmes that will fulfil the development targets for the State and country. It also needed to adopt approaches that are more aligned with corporate thinking and practices as it needed to work alongside the private sector in implementing economic development programmes for the State.

The SCS staff also needed to motivate the people to develop and guide them to take advantage of the economic opportunities presented by the government's economic development programmes. They needed to motivate the people to be more participative and actively involved in the development process. The people have to be supportive and cooperative when projects are being implemented, for ultimately, development means progress that would improve their own standards of living and quality of life.

With all these changes, Sarawak civil servants needed to be equipped with the capacity to manage the implementation of the government's development agenda.

From all this emerged a new factor in the life and work of the civil servants that would dominate in the years to come – partnership with politicians. The SCS had to learn to manage the political environment, the stability of which is vital for any policy to succeed. It was generally accepted that in a multi-ethnic society like Sarawak, economic and development progress can be achieved only if there is political stability and cooperation and harmony among the people.

This requires them to learn how to manage their working relationship with the politicians who decide on the development directions for the State and their respective constituents. Acting as a vital link between the government and the people, civil servants must implement government policies and programmes, and they are expected to do so in cooperation with the people whose needs, concerns and aspirations need to be taken into account in the decision-making process.

The civil service, must also be honest and seen to be socially progressive. Along with winning the support of the people, the civil servants are entrusted with the task of improving the quality of life of the people.

In essence, this means that in performing their duties, the interests and welfare of the people are paramount. Effective implementation of development agendas and programmes can take place only if there is consensus and support from the public that the civil servants serve.

The civil servants have to accept that this can only be made possible if and when the politicians, the private sector and the general public - are satisfied with the provision of services by the civil service organisation. Henceforth, “service delivery excellence” becomes the end-all and be-all for the SCS organisation.

Trust Building through Service Delivery Excellence

A lack of service delivery excellence can have significant negative impacts on the perception and trustworthiness of civil service organisations, for instance:-

1. **Deteriorating public perception:** When civil service organisations fail to deliver their services efficiently, effectively, and promptly, it erodes public trust. Citizens may view these organisations as unreliable and unresponsive, which can lead to a decline in overall public perception.
2. **Diminished credibility:** Civil service organisations are expected to be accountable, transparent, and dependable. However, if they consistently fail to meet service expectations, their credibility suffers. This can be particularly detrimental to critical services like healthcare, transportation, or public safety.
3. **Reduced public participation and engagement:** A lack of service delivery excellence can discourage citizen engagement and involvement in public affairs. If people perceive that their concerns are not heard or addressed by civil service entities, they may become disenchanted and refrain

from actively participating in civic activities such as elections, public consultations, or community development initiatives.

4. Increased scepticism towards government: Civil service organisations are typically the face of the government for citizens, and their performance strongly influences public opinion towards the government as a whole. If citizens consistently experience poor service quality, they may become cynical and develop a negative attitude towards the entire government system, affecting trust in various government institutions.
5. Impacted economic development: Service delivery excellence is crucial for economic growth and attracting investment. When civil service organisations fail to deliver services efficiently, it can deter businesses from investing and consumers from spending. This can lead to a stagnant economy, reduced job opportunities, and an overall decline in the standard of living.

Realising all these, and coupled with their primary role as the implementing arm of the government's development agenda, the Sarawak civil service has prioritised the goal of attaining service delivery excellence to build trust and maintain positive perceptions. They have accepted that meeting citizens' expectations by consistently delivering quality services can enhance their credibility, encourage public participation, and strengthen trust in government institutions. Hence, the SCS has come up with initiatives aimed at improving its capacity to improve service delivery. The SCS is focused on driving and managing changes to improve its service delivery.

Embedding Learning Culture

Continuous learning is now an integral part of the Sarawak civil service work culture. In their efforts to meet, and even exceed, the expectations of the people, the roles and responsibilities of the civil servants become even more exacting and demanding. To help them meet the demands and challenges they face daily in their jobs, civil servants can now avail of the numerous training and career development programmes offered by the Sarawak civil service. From core skills enhancement designed for support staff to advanced

management degree programmes for senior officers, all civil servants have an opportunity to continuously upgrade and improve their competencies and capabilities.

Quality

Quality is the cornerstone of the Sarawak civil service. Quality initiatives implemented by the civil service, such as Quality Control Circles (QCC), Total Quality Management (TQM), ISO certifications, Balanced Scorecards and Investment in People Standards (IIPs) are all designed to inculcate a quality mindset among civil servants. Civil servants are encouraged to lead their families and communities in adopting quality as a way of life.

Information & Communication Technology (ICT) and Digitisation

The Sarawak civil service looks at ICT as a strategic and competitive driver of development within the public service and society as a whole. As such, ICT programmes in the civil service are all designed to help people face the challenges presented by the fast-paced changes and disruptions brought about by technology. Today, most of the Sarawak government processes have been digitised or are in the process of digitisation to enable a full-pledged e-government capability.

Safe and Conducive Working Environment

To ensure that civil servants apply their knowledge, skills and capabilities to the fullest in their tasks, the Sarawak civil service strives to provide a safe and conducive working environment for its staff. Government facilities such as Residents and District Offices even in the remotest areas of Sarawak are now equipped with up-to-date facilities and equipment. These not only help civil servants perform their tasks more efficiently and effectively; it also makes government offices more approachable and welcoming to the general public.

Openness and Accessibility

Getting down to the ground to personally assess situations and deliver speedy solutions, developing and strictly observing Clients' Charters, making service counters as pleasant and as friendly as possible, devising forms that are simple and user-friendly, holding "meet-the-customer" open days, setting up hotlines and producing and disseminating useful information on the civil service, setting up "Sarawak Service" facilities, organising High Performance Team (HPT) activities - these are just but a few of the ways that the Sarawak civil servants maintain an open and welcoming quality. For the Sarawak civil service, openness and accessibility to the public that they serve, and to each other, are essential qualities of an organisation committed to customer satisfaction.

Total Wellness

The discipline required of a civil servant necessitates them be of a sound mind. Hence, the Sarawak civil service places priority on Total Wellness and Fitness Programmes for its staff.

Volunteerism

True to their calling as "servant leaders", civil servants in Sarawak are ready and willing to lend a hand in civic-oriented activities, be it participating in regular "gotong royong" events or taking active parts in the *Askar Wataniah* programme of the government. Volunteerism and civic-mindedness are qualities that the Sarawak civil service encourages among the people in its employ.

Proven Resilience and Capacity as Change Agents for Development

Summing up, Sarawak civil servants have to demonstrate resilience, perseverance and the capacity for strategic thinking as agents of change for the nation's development and progress. Envisioning a desirable future for the nation becomes a foundational element in driving change and as such, they have to constantly identify areas requiring improvement. As change agents, the SCS must possess the ability to analyse complex social, economic, technological and political landscapes while considering the diverse needs and aspirations of different segments of society.

As change agents, they must have the capacity to engage with diverse stakeholders and rally their support. Genuine dialogue, inclusive decision-making processes, and effective persuasion play vital roles in building consensus and mobilising resources and efforts towards achieving common goals. As such, Sarawak's civil servants must adeptly communicate their vision, weaving a compelling narrative that inspires action and fosters a sense of collective responsibility among citizens.

Furthermore, civil servants as change agents must possess strong leadership qualities that inspire trust and motivate others. They should act as role models, demonstrating integrity, accountability, and a commitment to ethical principles. By setting the right example, civil servants can instil confidence and inspire others to actively participate in nation-building initiatives.

In addition to leadership qualities, civil servants as change agents should possess a solid understanding of policy-making processes and the ability to navigate complex bureaucratic systems. By leveraging this knowledge, they can effectively advocate for policy changes, reforms, and implementation strategies that align with their vision for a better nation. This entails thorough research, data analysis, and engaging experts to ensure evidence-based decision-making.

Indeed, the challenges confronting the Sarawak civil servants over the last 60 years of Sarawak's independence within Malaysia are tough and seem insurmountable at times. But they proved equal to the challenges and fulfilled their tasks remarkably well.

The experiences of some of Sarawak's civil servants who served during the last 60 years bear witness to the crucial roles that civil servants played as catalysts for a progressive Sarawak. The memorable experiences they shared as civil servants attest to the fact that being a civil servant is truly a meaningful and noble vocation. The challenges they faced and surmounted and the changes that they effected helped transform Sarawak from an undeveloped nation 60 years ago to a high-income state on its way to becoming a leading nation in the Asia-Pacific region today.

Their stories of dedication and selfless service to the nation are inspiring and one hopes that these qualities remain strong among the ranks of Sarawak's civil servants today and in the future.

Part 2

Glimpses of Changes through the Years

These are the stories of retired civil servants and the challenges that they faced as they played their role as change agents in Sarawak's development journey. In these accounts, they described the conditions in which they found themselves, the encounters that they had, the dangers that many of them had to face, the significant moments when they had to make those crucial decisions that affected the trajectory of Sarawak's development.

While these accounts are but just mere **glimpses** of what they had actually experienced and contributed to Sarawak's 60 years of development, these serve as credible testament of the sacrifices, commitment, motivations and contributions of retired civil servants in building up the Sarawak civil service organisation as an effective change agent and catalyst of development in Sarawak.

For Sarawak civil servants of today and in the future, the challenges that they face (and will face) are undoubtedly different. However, it will do them well to know, understand and emulate the heart of service that former civil servants demonstrated throughout their careers. The SCS organisation that we see now, after 60 years of Sarawak's independence, was built strength upon strength with the utmost dedication to serve and make a difference in the lives of the people that they serve. For them, it is truly an honour to serve.





TAN SRI DATUK AMAR (DR)
HAJI ABDUL AZIZ BIN
DATO HAJI HUSAIN

After successfully securing a scholarship from Shell to obtain my ACCA qualifications, I was determined to continue advancing my education with a master's degree. The prospect of studying economics appealed to me, and I applied for a JPA scholarship. However, during the interview, the panel suggested that I consider pursuing an MBA instead, given my background in business. I took their advice and ended up securing a place at Syracuse University, New York, USA in 1977 for a two-year Masters in Business Administration (MBA) program, with a focus on finance.

Upon completing my studies and returning to Sarawak in 1979, I had the privilege of starting my career at the State Financial Secretary's (SFS) Office as a principal assistant secretary in finance. This marked the beginning of a long and fulfilling journey in the Sarawak civil service, during which I have had the opportunity to contribute to the development of the State and its people.

Throughout my career, I had many opportunities to leverage my knowledge and capacities to facilitate the growth and progress of Sarawak. By serving in various administrative and managerial roles within the civil service, I had the opportunity to initiate and implement policies and programmes aimed at improving the lives of the general population.

I take great pride in the fact that my career has been marked by a spirit of innovation and a drive to create new opportunities for both civil servants and the citizens of Sarawak.

Looking back, I am filled with gratitude and a profound sense of fulfilment for the many years I have dedicated to the civil service. I am proud to have played a part in the development and progress of Sarawak through the various positions I held in the SCS.

When I was appointed as the deputy chairman of Sarawak Economic Development Corporation (SEDC) in 1981, I had the opportunity to set up the Bumiputera Entrepreneurs Division, which was tasked with empowering bumiputera business owners by providing them with the necessary business know-how, exposure and facilities and other resources. At that time, there was a lack of interest and acumen among bumiputeras to engage in businesses. We focused on creating a better business environment to encourage bumiputera entrepreneurs, particularly those in the kampungs or rural areas. The initiative included setting up facilities such as shophouses and providing

assistance such as training in business skills and know-how as in bookkeeping and accounting, as well as providing loans to support the growth of small businesses. The main goal was to see them grow and expand into larger enterprises. Today, we can see that most of those bumiputera business owners who were assisted by SEDC have successfully grown their business enterprises.

After my tenure at SEDC, I was transferred back to the Sarawak Civil Service (SCS) as Deputy State Financial Secretary in January 1987 and served in that capacity for three and a half years. Subsequently, I was appointed to the Ministry of Infrastructure as the permanent secretary. During my time there, I was involved in the planning and implementation of various projects, such as the barrage and several water supply projects, including the Bengoh Dam.

When I was the Deputy State Secretary (DSS), I was tasked by the then State Secretary, Tan Sri Hamid Bugo, to oversee the SCS quality management initiatives. We started the move to obtain international quality certification standards such as ISO for our government processes to instil quality work culture and mindset among the civil servants.

When I took over as State Secretary in August 2000, I made it a priority to pursue the restructuring and re-engineering of work processes within the civil service to make it a “lean, nimble, adaptable and knowledge-intensive organisation.”

We strengthened our focus on quality management and approaches to improve service delivery. We had started implementing Total Quality Management (TQM) in the service. And so, most government agencies were already familiar with quality circles as a tool to improve their work processes and productivity. Most government agencies have also acquired ISO quality certification.

Then, we focused on upgrading the quality of our human resources within the SCS. I needed to do this because our survival in the borderless, knowledge-based economy required us to be equipped with new skills and to assimilate into the culture of high technology and innovation. So, we had to accelerate the process of acquiring new knowledge, skills and values.

We set up the Human Resource Department and Quality Unit (HRDQ) of the Chief Minister’s Department, and the Centre for Modern Management (CMM). These two entities collaborated to develop various training programmes

for the managerial and professional groups within the SCS. These were the Advanced Management Program (AMP) for top management, Management Development Program (MDP) for middle management and Executive Development Program (EDP) for Grade 3 officers with less than five years of working experience.

A competency-based programme called Core Skills for Effectiveness and Change or COSEC was redeveloped as the Support Staff Development Program (SSDP) to meet the changing needs of the support group. For the supervisory group, the Supervisory Department Program (SDP) was redesigned to incorporate new modules on Quality, Team Leadership and Total Wellness. Additional modules on e-communication and Safe Working Environments were added. Specialised competency development programmes were implemented in collaboration with national and international universities. These included a Master's in Environmental Science, a Master's in Economics (Development), a Certificate in Civil Engineering, Mechanical Engineering and a Certificate in Town Regional Planning.

We introduced measurement systems and approaches such as the Balanced Scorecard as a pilot project in four government agencies. We also adopted other human resource-related quality initiatives such as Investment In People Standards (IIPs). I believe that through these initiatives, there was a change in attitude among SCS officers toward the need to improve quality and total human resource development in the civil service.

Also, during my term as State Secretary, I focused on drawing up a more integrated, coordinated and proper planning of Sarawak's ICT programmes. We held a series of Information Technology Strategic Planning (ITSP) workshops to consolidate and integrate all ICT efforts in the State public service. The ITSP project enabled the State government to develop effective and coherent ICT programmes and plans that cut across all agencies in the State public service.

The rationale behind the ITSP project arose from the government's desire to maximise the benefits and effectiveness of its ICT programmes. It ensured that the ICT programmes and projects of all agencies were planned, implemented and monitored properly. It also coordinated and integrated ICT programmes and projects which helped minimise wastage and duplication of resources, and maximise synergy and benefits to the government and the people.

The SCS also appointed Chief Information Officers (CIOs). The CIOs were responsible for all ICT matters in their respective agencies. The state government also delegated the security of ICT systems and ICT data to the systems owners. ICT Security Officers (ICTSOs) were appointed by all state government agencies that implement ICT systems. ICTSOs were responsible for managing and protecting their ICT systems and facilities to ensure that they were used properly, securely and legally to prevent them from being used for malicious acts and violations against the government's interests.

I also directed that ICT audits be carried out on all applications systems developed and implemented by the State government. This was undertaken by the Internal Audit Unit, assisted by the State ICT Unit. All transactions had to incorporate audit trails that were protected to ensure that any transaction could be tracked and analysed any time by the auditors or appointed inspectors. We knew that the human factor was the most important factor in ICT systems security, and government employees were expected and required to be principled, honest and security conscious.

We also launched the State government's new central website, called MyOneStopSarawak, or MOSS. MOSS was intended to be the central portal to access all the State agencies' websites. But MOSS was much more than a central directory for agency websites. It was a one-stop site for all matters relating to the State, including information and online services. A key component of MOSS was the electronic bill and presentment (EBPP) system. The EBPP system enabled registered users to receive and pay their bills online. The State's policy was for all bills from its agencies and entities to be made available on the EBPP system on the MOSS portal.

The EBPP was one of the key solutions that greatly enhanced convenience for the public. It was a virtual collection counter that was accessible anytime and anywhere in the world. The EBPP service was the first online multi-biller and multi-bank payment system in Malaysia when it was launched in April 2000. SESCO was the first biller and RHB Bank Berhad was the first financial institution. Other billers came onboard soon after, including Kuching Water Board, Sibu Water Board, Telekom Malaysia, TM Net, *Dewan Bandaraya Kuching Utara* (DBKU), Miri Municipal Council, Sibu Municipal Council, Bintulu Development Authority (BDA) and *Majlis Bandaraya Kuching Selatan* (MBKS), *Lembaga Air Kawasan Utara* (LAKU), and Sarawak Gas. This was the precursor of our fintech app now called S Pay Global.

We did all these because ICT has become increasingly important in government service delivery. It is now almost impossible to contemplate how the public sector would function without ICT. With better ICT awareness and competencies, the public now demands and expects that public services be delivered quickly, conveniently and cost-effectively to them. ICT is now considered a major component of quality service provision and delivery within the State government machinery. Our success will depend upon our ability to transform the whole State civil service from a manual to a computing paradigm.

I am also pleased that I had a hand in the expansion and improvement of telecommunications and internet connectivity when we established SACOFA, which is fully owned by the State. It was established to manage telecommunication infrastructure including towers and laying of fibre-optic cables. As we continue to progress into a digital age, the presence of a robust and extensive telecommunication infrastructure is vital for economic growth and development. This also reflects Sarawak's commitment to bridging the digital divide and ensuring that all citizens have access to the benefits of the digital economy

Furhermore, I am proud to have been involved in setting up PPKS (*Pusat Pembangunan Kemahiran Sarawak*), also known as Sarawak Skills, which was established in 1999 as an initiative to provide industry-specific skills training in Sarawak. It is an organization owned by industries and has grown to nearly 90 members, who elect the Board of Management Council every two years. The idea for PPKS was conceived by the Premier of Sarawak, Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri (Dr) Abang Haji Abdul Rahman Zohari Bin Tun Datuk Abang Haji Openg, who was then the Minister for Industrial Development in Sarawak.

Over the years, PPKS has evolved into Sarawak Skills and has established a separate entity now called i-CATS University College, which offers full degrees and diplomas. This expansion was necessary as Sarawak Skills was initially focused on providing skill-specific training. The growth and development of PPKS into Sarawak Skills and i-CATS University College has been a testament to its success in meeting the demands of the industry and providing quality education and training to the people of Sarawak. The contributions of PPKS, Sarawak Skills, and i-CATS University College have been instrumental in addressing the skills gap in Sarawak and equipping individuals with the

necessary expertise to thrive in various industries. As such, these institutions are now valuable assets to Sarawak's economic and social development.

I was also privileged to be involved in the corporatization of several entities, including Sarawak Enterprise which later became Sarawak Energy. After holding a small corporate position, I became the chairman and later the CEO of Sarawak Enterprise, ultimately transforming it into Sarawak Energy. During my tenure, Sarawak Energy became a publicly listed company, only to be privatized once again under government ownership. During my time as the CEO of Sarawak Energy, I oversaw the construction of the first combined cycle power plant in Bintulu, as well as the development of the Murum Dam.

My interest in energy and its potential for development began when I worked on a policy to define energy as a critical sector for development. This early involvement in energy policy laid the foundation for my later work in the energy sector.

After retiring from the SCS, at the request of the Premier, I returned to lead the Sarawak Economic Development Corporation (SEDC) again. This time, I advocated for SEDC to focus on energy and the green economy. My efforts have been driven by a recognition of the importance of energy to development, and a commitment to promoting sustainable and innovative energy solutions. To this end, we set up SEDC Energy, which is mandated to achieve, in concert with other entities such as Sarawak Energy, Sarawak's goal of generating most of its power from renewable energy such as hydropower, solar and wind energy, and biofuels such as aviation fuel from algae and hydrogen fuel.

Mobility is a key aspect of any modern city's infrastructure. Taking this fact into consideration as well as the reality of the transportation sector being a major cause of the world's climate change issues, the Sarawak government has taken steps to improve mobility through the development of a new metro system. YAB Premier has expressed his desire for a train system to be implemented, and to make this a reality, we established Sarawak Metro. The proposed metro system in Sarawak will utilize a different technology, the Autonomous Rapid Transit (ART) system using hydrogen fuel. Sarawak Metro also introduced the use of hydrogen buses in Sarawak. These initiatives align with Sarawak's commitment to sustainable and clean energy solutions for our transportation network.

In all these experiences and exposure that I have had as a civil servant, the one thing that I want to emphasise is the value of continuous learning. It is important to recognize that learning should not stop once a certain level of education or expertise has been achieved. The world is constantly evolving, and new information and technologies are always emerging. Therefore, it is crucial to stay up to date with the latest developments not only in one's field but in other areas as well.

In today's rapidly advancing technological landscape, the need for continuous learning is more apparent than ever. The field of artificial intelligence (AI), for example, is constantly evolving and expanding, and it is vital for professionals to stay knowledgeable about the latest developments in order to remain effective in their careers.

Ultimately, the pursuit of lifelong learning is essential for personal and professional development. It provides individuals with the opportunity to adapt to changes, stay relevant in their fields, and pursue new interests and passions. Continuous learning is a valuable investment in oneself that can lead to increased opportunities and success in the long run. Personally, for me, I find it most satisfying when I am able to do something that other people say I cannot do. And being able to do so comes from my love of learning.⁶

Tan Sri Datuk Amar (Dr) Haji Abdul Aziz Bin Dato Haji Husain

served in the following capacities as a civil servant:

- State Secretary of Sarawak (2000 - 2006);
- Deputy State Secretary (Human Resources);
- Senior Administrative Officer in the Sarawak State Secretary's Office;
- Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Infrastructure Development;
- Deputy State Financial Secretary;
- Deputy Chairman, Sarawak Economic Development Corporation (SEDC);
- Principal Assistant Secretary, State Financial Secretary's Office;
- Assistant Secretary, State Planning Unit;
- Currently, he serves as Chairman of the SEDC.



DATU ALOYSIUS J. DRIS

The beginning of my civil service career was in early 1966; if I can lay claim to that year as the starting point, with my pre-university attachment at the District Office in Sibul. At that time, I was fortunate to get the Colombo Plan scholarship to further my studies in Canada. For the period from January to July after we received our scholarship offer and while waiting for the school term to start, we were sent for attachment at the nearest District Office (DO) to our home.

This 6-months attachment was an excellent opportunity for me to learn the operations and functions of the DO. It was a matter of pride to be a part of the Sarawak Administrative Service even as a trainee. The first task I was trained and assigned was to issue shotgun cartridge permits and to deal with the simpler and more straightforward cases of probate matters. This was my first taste of dealing with the public and the community leaders. There were also some occasions when I was tasked to represent the DO and attend community-related events when the District Officer or the Sarawak Administrative Officer was not able to make it due to prior engagements. One such event was at the funeral of a community leader. I realised that such an occasion as this was an important learning opportunity to understand traditional knowledge of socio-cultural practices of the community, in this case, that of the Iban. It impressed upon me that it is an important quality of any civil servant in Sarawak to be able to understand and appreciate the traditions and cultures of all the indigenous people of Sarawak.

From here on, the events leading up to the opportunities that presented themselves to me were not planned but rather fell into place in an interesting way. I consider myself privileged to be in the right place at the right time, so to speak.

After I finished my degree in Public Administration from Canada, I went back to Sarawak expecting to be reinstated in the District Office. But my hope was dashed as there was no position available for me at that time. Such was the uncertain job situation in the country during the early 70s. It so happened that 1970 was a population census year, and I managed to secure a job as a Census Supervisor. The area I was assigned to cover was in Batang Igan, a distributary of the Rajang River downriver from Sibul. I found this experience of gathering information about families, kampungs and longhouses in the area quite

enlightening. The information we obtained from the interview forms gave interesting patterns and scenarios of the people and their activities. These data and information also made me aware of the socio-economic conditions of the people in the region as a whole. Whenever I came across the 1970 Census Report, I always felt closely identified with it because I was directly involved in the project as one of the many supervisors throughout Malaysia.

It was shortly after I finished with the Population Census 1970 Project that I was interviewed by the Public Service Commission (PSC) for the job of an Assistant Information Officer in the Federal Department of Information in Kuching, Sarawak. Around the same time, there was an opportunity given to graduates for direct entry into the Royal Malaysian Police Force as Cadet Assistant Superintendent/Chief Inspector of Police. This offered a nine-month training opportunity at the Police College Kuala Kubu Baru, Selangor. I applied and was accepted, and I started my training at the Police College. My training in the Police College had gone on for barely six weeks when I received a letter of offer from the Public Service Commission offering me the post of Assistant Information Officer. I decided to leave my police training and returned to Kuching to report for duty at the State Information Department headquarters.

Shortly after reporting for duty, I was sent to the national headquarters in Angkasapuri, Kuala Lumpur for an attachment to familiarise myself with the National Operation works in the Ministry and Department in general. I was also sent to various locations in Peninsular Malaysia, mostly in the northern region of the country, to see some of their typical information and psywar/psyops campaigns and observe how they were carried out in certain sensitive areas of the country where there were still security threats.

As I reflect on my career, my perceptions of the many serious matters of the state and the country over the years have been shaped largely by my early formative and impressionable years in the Information Department. There were occasions and events when we received some reasonable support for our efforts and other general operations from the headquarters in Kuala Lumpur. But oftentimes, we were left very much on our own, and we felt strongly that things could have been much better if efforts were made to establish better understanding and rapport.

I was under the impression then that there was this prevailing thinking or perception that the cases of Sabah and Sarawak seemed to be mere pawns on the chessboards when it came to the opportunities and emplacements. This was clearly seen through the placements of officers from the Peninsula and through the budgetary and planning process and in the manner that PSD and Treasury Officials were bulldozing their views and opinions during budget examinations even though they were plain ignorant of situations in Sarawak and Sabah. It was most frustrating to observe that there was very little goodwill and understanding between the 'examiners' and the 'examined' so to speak. I witnessed occasions when the two State Directors of Information from Sabah and Sarawak, who were very senior officers compared to other State Directors in rank and experience, literally gave up on the junior representatives on the level of mere Assistant Secretary from the PSD and the Treasury who blurted out their ignorance and their insensitive remarks. This led to unpleasant exchanges during finance and planning meetings in the headquarters. It was such a harrowing experience, to say the least. I consoled myself with the thought that it was just part of the birth pain of nationhood, which would eventually subside over time as the country developed and matured.

I do believe that great measures of understanding have developed over the years, and sensitivities to the views and opinions of either side now, hopefully, pervade the atmosphere of meetings and discussions, be they on politics or in the affairs of the civil service or in matters of development interests to the states and nation. Malaysia has come a long way and has achieved much all around but there is a lot more which can be achieved with style, refined culture, and decorum where both the Federal and State governments can work in tandem, appreciating the need to be conscious of shared national objectives to be supported by shared values.

When I returned to work in the Information Department Sarawak after the brief attachment and familiarisation tour in Peninsular Malaysia, I felt that it was worse than being thrown into the deep end of the pool to swim on my own. The Head Office was only able to give me the general guidelines on the 'what and the how' of the business at hand. Much of my work had to deal quite

directly with the Resident and the District Officers as well as other related agencies in the Division, particularly the members of the then Divisional Security Committee and the Divisional Development Committee.

My exposure to information works gave me the advantage of being involved in both the macro view in policy and information campaigns as well as the micro view in the conduct of internal, regional, state, divisional or district level information campaigns in the country. During my years in the Information Department, there had always been rapport and cooperation with the State Administration, the Police, the Military Authorities and other government departments and agencies at the various levels so that joint operations and information campaigns, whenever required, were executed without unnecessary hitches. The need to understand and empathise with other departments and agencies was crucial in our work relationship. Federal departments, such as the Information Department, by nature of their work, had to work in tandem with the State authorities because a lot of their work, responsibilities had to be carried out together with many other agencies.

In the 1970s and early 1980s, much of the efforts and resources were directed towards stabilising the socio-political situation and maintaining the over-all security of the State. It was the main concern of the government then. Operation Sri Aman, as that major security landmark achievement was called, was a major turning point in achieving political stability in the State of Sarawak. Peace was generally restored, although the situation was still somewhat precarious. This was when the Security Operation led to a massive laying down of arms by the Communist terrorists which had all the while plagued the State and terrorised many rural and urban areas throughout Sarawak.

It was a turning point in the history of Sarawak and, achieving this milestone was largely due to the cooperation and collaboration of the Federal and State government agencies in Sarawak. Subsequently, the State leaders were able to concentrate more on socio-economic development more than expending the State's resources and efforts on security.

Having a background in the information industry and being exposed to international affairs played a crucial role in my career journey in the Sarawak

civil service. The knowledge of communications techniques, publications, editing, public relations campaign and media management as well as field campaigns and information management and analysis were very useful.

To me, such knowledge and exposure gave me the added boost and confidence when I was appointed to senior positions and even to lead and manage organisations as I have fortunately, been given the opportunity to undertake throughout my career. Some of the major national information campaigns I had the experience to plan and mount during my years in the Information Department included big national campaigns such as awareness creation and internalisation of our Rukun Negara, the New Economic Policy, Poverty Eradication programmes and others.

Also, my first practical exercise in international relations occurred when I served as an Information Officer in Limbang, and I had to deal with matters related to Brunei. Later, when I moved to the Sarawak Timber Industry Development Corporation (STIDC), one significant international matter I had to deal with was a controversy related to our timber industry. The negative attention the controversy brought to Sarawak required me to utilise my skills in handling international affairs. The International Timber Trade Organization (ITTO) visited our region, and I, along with Dato Leo Chai and our team in STIDC, handled the situation.

When I was appointed as Permanent Secretary for Sarawak's Ministry of Tourism and also as the first Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Sarawak Tourism Board, I had the opportunity then to be involved in drawing up the Second Tourism Master Plan for Sarawak. The First Tourism Master Plan primarily focused on infrastructural preparations. While this was important and necessary, it became evident that the softer aspects of tourism, such as developing tourism products, training the requisite manpower such as tourists' guides, and improving hospitality standards and services, also needed to be prioritised. Therefore, the Second Tourism Master Plan served as a guide to address these crucial aspects that were overlooked in the first plan.

The Second Tourism Master Plan proved to be a valuable resource. It not only emphasised the need for continual improvement and development in infrastructure, such as hotels and transportation but also shed light on the

importance of enhancing the overall tourism experience. By referring to this plan, it became easier to challenge decisions made by government officials who were not aware of or neglected the guidelines set forth.

To successfully implement the development of necessary facilities and infrastructure, it is essential to identify those who possess the required resources. In this regard, it was accepted that the business community, particularly those involved in sectors that are beneficial for tourism, can play a significant role. As they have a vested interest in the success of both tourism and their own businesses, they can provide the support needed to establish the necessary facilities.

It is worth noting that the Second Tourism Master Plan incorporated some adaptations to fulfil the needs of the business community. It was a necessary step to ensure the alignment of tourism and business interests. By engaging with the private sector, a measure of success was achieved, as their expertise and dedication to profitability were invaluable.

The Second Tourism Master Plan expanded upon the initial focus on infrastructure and addressed the softer elements of tourism. By utilising this plan as a reference point, the government was able to engage with the business community, which ultimately facilitated the necessary developments. The plan served as a foundation for more comprehensive and well-rounded tourism strategies.

The most fulfilling aspect of my involvement in serving the people is the recognition and appreciation of what Sarawak has to offer to the world. As I work in the field of tourism, I had the privilege of sharing captivating Sarawak destinations and experiences with the world. Witnessing people's reactions, especially those who become repeat visitors, brings immense satisfaction. It feels almost magical to witness the impact of my contribution to their lives.

While some may perceive it as boastful, I believe that recognising and celebrating our achievements is essential. It is gratifying to know that our efforts are being acknowledged and that people genuinely value what we offer. Even though we may not anticipate such overwhelming success, we are aware that somewhere along the line, people will recognise the inherent

beauty of our state. Whether the recognition comes with criticism or not, it is significant because it highlights the impact we have on the lives of those we serve.

However, it is essential to remember that the people themselves are the core of our work. Their friendliness and warmth towards visitors are not merely an act but a genuine trait that continues to resonate with me. Despite language barriers, they strive to communicate and connect, going above and beyond to make visitors feel welcome. Whether they can speak fluent English or are proficient in other languages, they try to break down barriers swiftly. The sight of visitors being pleasantly surprised by this hospitality is a truly rewarding experience.

My involvement in serving the people is most fulfilling when I witness the recognition and appreciation directed towards the services we provided and the tourism products that we created such as the now globally famous, Rainforest World Music Festival. Being able to serve as a civil servant, I find immense fulfilment in witnessing the positive impact of my work.⁶

Datu Aloysius J. Dris

served in the following capacities as a civil servant:

- Divisional Information Officer, Head of Field Service Division and Deputy Director, Malaysian Information Service (1971 - 1984);
- Senior Administrative Officer, and later as Deputy General Manager, Sarawak Timber Industry Development Corporation (STIDC) (1984 - 1994);
- Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Tourism (1994 - 1999);
- Chief Executive Officer, Sarawak Tourism Board (STB) (1999 - 2003);
- He is currently the Chief Executive Officer of Yayasan Parpaduan Sarawak (YPS).



PROFESSOR DATU
DR ANDREW KIYU DAWIE USOP

In 1976, I commenced my career as a house medical officer. I had no idea then of the significant changes that lay ahead for the department in the process of putting the medical services under the purview of the Federal government. When I joined the medical service, the Sarawak Health Department, known as the Medical Department then, operated independently from the Federal government. My job interview was conducted by the Sarawak Health Director, which indicated the distinct separation between the state and federal administrative bodies. Over the years, I witnessed a transformation in the structure of Malaysia's health services. The Medical Department under the Federal government is now completely centralised.

When I first started in the early 1980s, I experienced and appreciated the collaboration and close-knit working relationship between the Sarawak civil service and various federal departments and agencies. The Senior Government Officers Association of Sarawak (SGOAS) union is a good example of this harmonious relationship.

For instance, as a Divisional Medical Officer, it was customary for me to inform the Resident whenever we would be away from the division for an extended period, despite belonging to a federal agency. This is because we accept and respect the Resident's role as the head of the civil service in that specific division.

Regrettably, in recent times, I have noticed a decline in the camaraderie between the staff of federal and state government agencies. Previously, we shared a close bond, often knowing each other on a personal level. Notably, the late Datuk Yusuf Puteh, former State Secretary, had a personal acquaintance with me, despite me being part of the federal civil service.

Then, during annual events like Merdeka Day, we would have friendly competitions, such as football games between the state and federal civil service. This provided ample opportunities for us to develop lasting relationships. However, the current situation seems different, potentially due to the sheer size of the federal and state civil service agencies, making it challenging to foster personal connections. Moreover, the federal agency staff based in Sarawak may feel more accountable to their superiors in Kuala Lumpur, contributing to this detachment.

I think it is important to revive the spirit of friendship, beyond mere collaboration, among the federal and state civil servants. In a time where large numbers may have diminished personal connections, rekindling this bond would undoubtedly strengthen inter-agency relationships and enhance overall

efficiency. By embracing this sentiment, we can strive for a cohesive and harmonious civil service, ensuring seamless cooperation between different levels of government.

The challenges we faced in the early years can be broken down into two main areas: communication and transportation. In terms of transportation, travelling by boat was often the only option due to a lack of road connectivity. Even today, some areas in Kapit are accessible only via rivers, which can be slow and dangerous. Travelling by river was not only more expensive but also more dangerous than travelling by road. In fact, many lives were lost while navigating through the treacherous Pelagus rapid. This made it extremely difficult for us to determine the cause of death in cases where bodies were found in the river. There were only two 'fridges' in the Kapit mortuary at that time, making it challenging to handle and process bodies properly. We had to dispense with the required postmortem most of the time and just declare the cause of death as "due to drowning", as by the time the bodies were discovered, they were already in an advanced stage of decomposition. Additionally, the road conditions were poor, with dusty and muddy paths. Vehicles often got stuck in the mud during rainy seasons while becoming extremely dusty when it was sunny. This made transportation even more frustrating and time-consuming.

In terms of communication, there were significant challenges, especially in rural areas. During an outbreak of hand, foot, and mouth disease in 1997, I had to request a satellite phone to communicate effectively. The lack of proper telecommunication infrastructure made it difficult to respond to emergencies and coordinate efforts efficiently.

Despite these challenges, our staff displayed a remarkable spirit of resourcefulness and innovation, as they had limited resources to work with. For example, the Sarawak Health Department applied ingenuity when they developed their own wooden dental chair to provide dental care. This demonstrates the dedication and resourcefulness of civil servants during that era.

Furthermore, there was a strong sense of caring within the healthcare community. Medical professionals like the late Lau Ngee Chang went above and beyond their duties to care for the children, Penan children in particular.

I believe this is because many civil servants, including myself, came from humble backgrounds. Growing up in a village with limited access to basic amenities such as electricity and water instilled in us a deep sense of empathy

and a desire to uplift the lives of the people we served. We understood the struggles and aspirations of the common people because we shared similar experiences.

This shared identity and sense of belonging to the people and the community fuelled our commitment to public service. We saw ourselves as custodians of our nation's development, striving to make a positive difference in the lives of our fellow citizens. The motivation to serve the community was driven by a genuine desire to make a difference, rather than solely for monetary compensation. During those times, we hardly talked or complained about our salaries. This shows the true dedication and commitment that existed among staff members. This kind of commitment, deep empathy and compassion seems less common today.

One rewarding experience I had as a civil servant in addition to my regular duties as a medical personnel was when I was engaged as a consultant by the World Health Organization (WHO) on its healthy cities and tourism initiatives.

Tourism development plays a crucial role in promoting economic growth and improving the standard of living in various regions. As a consultant for the WHO, my personal involvement focused on ensuring that the Sarawak tourism industry was sustainable and did not harm the environment. This approach not only benefited the health of tourists but also contributed to the livelihood of local communities.

One of the projects I worked on involved conducting a survey with a team from WHO on the Lemanak River Safari. Our goal was to teach the longhouse people how to prepare safer and healthier food for foreigners, reducing the likelihood of food poisoning. Additionally, we implemented measures to prevent the spread of diseases such as malaria, as any outbreaks could lead to negative publicity and deter potential tourists from visiting the area.

It is essential to emphasise that tourism development should not solely focus on marketing and selling the positive aspects of a destination. Neglecting the "back end" or behind-the-scenes aspects can have detrimental consequences. Hence, our research extended to areas such as Loagan Bunut, where we concentrated on preventing outbreaks and ensuring the well-being of both tourists and local communities.

My experience in this field has made me realise that a comprehensive and holistic approach to tourism development is necessary. By addressing not only the promotion of tourist attractions but also the health and safety aspects, we can foster sustainable practices that benefit all stakeholders involved. This view

is in line with the WHO's objective of promoting health in all sectors, including tourism.

Civil servants play a vital role in serving the public and ensuring the smooth functioning of the government. However, the identity, image, and personality of civil servants have evolved over the years.

My cohorts and I believe that being in the civil service is a privilege. It gives us the opportunity to make a difference in our communities. We closely identify with the people whom we serve.

As I mentioned earlier, most of the civil servants during my time came from poor families and from impoverished villages. When I graduated, there was no road yet in my village. Electricity had just arrived, and the water supply was not available. Growing up, we tapped rubber during school holidays. I believe this experience is what gave us the genuine desire to help improve the lives of the people. We could identify with their struggles, and we wanted them to have the opportunity to uplift their lives, just as we had. We really wanted to help people develop. We had this sense that Sarawak belongs to us, and we belong to Sarawak.

However, in today's globalised world, the concept of national identity has become more fluid. With the rise of technology and the ease of travel, people no longer feel tethered to a particular place. This has influenced the identity, image, and personality of civil servants. A sense of rootlessness and lack of belonging may sometimes lessen the passion and commitment to serving their own communities.

To address this issue, it is crucial to foster a sense of pride and ownership among civil servants. Enhancing training programs, promoting cultural awareness, and emphasising the significance of public service in the overall development of society can help reignite the same sense of identity and purpose in civil servants that we had in the past.

For instance, it is important for today's civil servants to be reminded of our duty and responsibility as stewards of the facilities we oversee. In the case of the medical and health services, that would be the public health clinics and hospitals under our care. It is crucial to understand that as civil servants, we must be responsible stewards of government resources and facilities that technically belong to the people because these come from the peoples' taxes. We are not just caretakers of facilities, but servants of the people.

In the past, we used to come together on Saturdays for "gotong royong" activities, where we would clean and beautify the clinics. These initiatives

showcased a sense of pride and ownership in the facilities they worked in. However, with the advent of privatisation, the belief that such tasks now belong solely to the cleaning services company has taken root. This change in mindset ultimately erodes our responsibility towards the facilities we oversee, the services we provide and the people we serve.

By taking ownership and pride in our work, we can create an environment that is conducive to providing excellent service. Civil servants must remember that we are here to serve the people and contribute towards their well-being. As stewards of these facilities, it is our duty to maintain and improve them, ensuring that they meet the needs of the people efficiently and effectively.

The quality of leadership also comes into play here. A leader is not simply someone who gives orders but someone who serves. A good leader ensures that the work of their staff is made easier and that they have the necessary resources to accomplish their tasks efficiently. As civil servants, it is our duty to lead by example and show our fellow staff members the importance of taking personal responsibility for the facilities we manage. Outsourcing tasks should not undermine our sense of belonging and responsibility towards the services we provide. Instead, we should remember that as leaders and servants of the people, it is our duty to ensure that the facilities are well-maintained and serve the needs of the community. We must work together to reinstate the sense of ownership and pride in our work, contributing towards a better society for all.⁶

Professor Datu Dr Andrew Kiyu Dawie Usop

served in the following capacities as a civil servant:

- District Medical-Officer-of-Health (March 1978 - August 1979);
- Deputy Director for Public Health, Sarawak (September 1995 - March 2007);
- Sarawak State Health Director (March 2007 - May 2008);
- Professor of Public Health, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, University of Malaysia Sarawak (April 2017 - May 2026).



DATO DR CHAI KHIN CHUNG

The security issue was a major challenge in Sarawak during the early years of Malaysia's formation. After Malaysia was established, we faced a major challenge, especially from the North Kalimantan Communist Party (NKCP), which operated in the southern and central regions of Sarawak. Almost all corners of the central and southern regions were threatened, affecting the lives of ordinary people negatively.

Even as a child then, I could see that civil servants in Sarawak were very committed to coordinating the security issues of the local people, even though they were confronted with threats from the NKCP. At that time, I witnessed how the Royal Malaysian Police played a very important role in maintaining the security and safety of the people, especially in areas that were threatened by the NKCP. I still remember when I was in school in 1969; the Information Services Department came to schools to distribute pamphlets and posters to school students about the threat of the communist insurgency.

Some government employees were killed because they served the authorities. I remember that the body of one such victim was found on the bridge at Mile 8, Penrissen Road, believed to have been killed by the NKCP.

The Rajang Security Command (RASCOM) was established on 26th March 1972 in response to the deteriorating security situation in the Mid-Rajang Basin. RASCOM was a special operation. Its main objective was to maintain law and order, public security and initiate measures aimed at mobilising the people to support the government against the communist insurgents. One incident stands out in my memory. A RASCOM officer serving in Sibu was poisoned at a restaurant. This episode illustrates the inherent risks associated with being a part of RASCOM.

Recognising the gravity of the situation, the government took appropriate actions to create a specialised command for the area. Many residents were initially unaware of the NKCP threat, and it was crucial to raise awareness

and ensure their safety. To combat the insurgency more effectively, RASCOM developed a comprehensive strategy. One of the core components was the relocation of residents from scattered longhouses to designated resettlement schemes. This not only protected these people from potential disruptions caused by the insurgents but also severed access of the insurgents to food, supplies, and potential recruits.

This approach was proven successful during the first emergency in West Malaysia. It was introduced by the former Chief of Police in London, who later became the first Governor of Malaya. The Templer Plan involved resettling the population to shield them from the physical and logistical dangers posed by the enemy. Four resettlement and cluster schemes were established in the Iban areas, namely Nanga Tada, Nanga Jagau, Nanga Ngungun, and Nanga Sekuau. These new settlements included the construction of new longhouses, and the provision of care and assistance.

With these well-thought-out measures and strategies, RASCOM achieved tremendous success in combating the communist insurgency. Notably, Malaysia stands as the only country in the world to have successfully defeated such an insurgency.

Seeing the commitment and bravery of the civil servants must have been my motivation to join the civil service. After I finished my secondary school education in 1974, I decided to join the civil service. Becoming a civil servant at that time presented numerous challenges besides security issues. Logistics, facilities, and working conditions were poor. An example was the use of typewriters, where making a correction meant having to start from scratch. Our offices were cramped and hot and lacked air conditioning. However, one aspect that was not an issue back then was racial diversity within the civil service. We formed friendships among individuals from different ethnic backgrounds, creating an environment of harmony and understanding.

When it came to overtime, we had a strong work ethic. If extra hours were required, we would work without hesitation. It was rare to see our bosses claim overtime, even when we had to work on weekends. This demonstrated our lack of materialistic mindset, as we were more focused on completing the tasks at hand. Our main concern was getting the job done and contributing to society rather than seeking personal gain. This dedication and selflessness were the traits that defined civil servants of that era.

During my time as a technician with the Telecommunications Department, I was assigned the task of installing radio equipment for RELA at Telok Melano, Lundu. This assignment provided a unique opportunity for me to witness the commitment and leadership of the District Officer (DO). He led us through a challenging journey, which involved travelling by sea in a long boat and trekking through the jungle. It was during this mission that I saw firsthand the DO's dedication to his role.

Telok Melano then was known to have a strong presence of insurgents. As we ventured further into the jungle, we had to navigate carefully. However, the insurgents did not harm us because their target was the RELA members, whom they accused of informing the security forces about their whereabouts. Unfortunately, after we completed the installation and left the site, the communist insurgents attacked the RELA members, resulting in casualties.

Despite the dangers we faced, including encounters with communist insurgents, our focus remained on completing the tasks assigned to us. Throughout these trying times, one quality that stood out among us was the willingness to take charge.

In my observation, many of my seniors displayed a natural inclination to take charge when the need arose. If the number one was not available, the number two would step up and lead. There was no waiting for instructions, no hesitation. Instead, they took the initiative and acted swiftly to maintain

harmony in the workplace. This spirit of teamwork and decisive action is something that must be strengthened in the culture of the civil service and in the mindset of civil servants, as our aim is to deliver quality services to the people.

Additionally, lifelong learning is a trait that should be embraced by civil servants. It is disheartening to see colleagues giving up on education after completing Form Five. However, there are inspiring figures who have defied such norms and continued their educational journey. Dato Clarence Rorote Sagon began as an office boy but managed to obtain a law degree and master's degree in management through self-study. Similarly, I pursued part-time studies at the age of 41, eventually earning five academic qualifications, from a diploma to a PhD by the time I turned 50. Another excellent example is TYT Tun Dato Sri Dr Haji Wan Junaidi Bin Tuanku Jaafar, who transitioned from being an inspector to studying law and becoming a Speaker of Dewan Negara and now our current Governor.

These examples highlight the fighting spirit that many civil servants possess. They demonstrate the tenacity to overcome obstacles and seek opportunities for growth and improvement.

To become a "world-class" civil service, we must consider these qualities and foster an environment that encourages their development. Mere rhetoric will not suffice; action is necessary to turn our aspirations into reality. By embracing the spirit of taking charge and committing to lifelong learning, civil servants can truly enhance their capabilities and provide exceptional services to the nation. Only then will the vision of a "world-class" civil service be achieved.

As civil servants, we must know who we are. We are here to serve the people. If you know who you are, you will provide a better service to the people. If you know you are the "servant" or "kuli" of the people, you understand yourself, and

you will give a better service. We must understand the fundamental principles of what it means to be a civil servant.

We must equip ourselves with adequate knowledge to make good decisions. A good civil servant dares to speak the truth. Not a “yes sir” man. A good civil servant abides by meritocracy and professionalism. Senior civil servants, especially, must not make decisions based on personal feelings or inclinations. They must be fair in all their decisions. A good servant not only does the routine but must also learn and practise whatever knowledge is needed to do a better job. They should also generate new knowledge and practices to take the SCS to a world-class level.⁶

Dato Dr Chai Khin Chung

served in the following capacities as a civil servant:

- Director of the Sarawak Security and Enforcement Unit, Department of the Premier of Sarawak (June 2016 – current);
- Deputy Commissioner of Police, Sarawak Contingent (September 2013 – October 2015);
- Deputy Commandant of the Royal Malaysia Police College (2011 – 2012);
- Head, Signal Engineering Division at the Federal Police Headquarters (2017 – 2021).



TAN SRI DATUK AMAR (DR)
HAJI HAMID BIN BUGO

My first stint as a civil servant was as an Assistant Secretary and subsequently as an Administrative Officer at the State Planning Unit (SPU) at the Chief Minister's Department from 1971 to 1977. During this time, talks of economic and social development filled the air. I observed, however, that the system of administration in the civil service was outdated and incompatible with the Sarawak government's aspirations for economic and social development. I felt a deep sense of unease with the status quo. I felt that there was a need for change.

In 1978, I was given an opportunity to be seconded to Malaysia LNG Sdn Bhd as an Administration Manager. I jumped at the chance, and this was my introduction to the corporate world. I liked the work and international exposure that I was getting at Malaysia LNG. So much so that I didn't have any intention of returning to the civil service at all.

It was only when the then Chief Minister (the late Tun Pehin Sri Haji Abdul Taib Mahmud) called for me and asked me to return to the service that I started considering it. I believed he was looking for young Sarawakian professionals and technocrats who shared his aspiration to see a more economically progressive Sarawak. I understood and appreciated his focus on Sarawak's economic development. I thought that my experience and international exposure working in the private sector could be useful to the State government. I also felt that as a Sarawakian who was fortunate to get a scholarship from the government for my tertiary education overseas, I was obligated to contribute to the development of the State.

I told Pehin Sri Taib that I would not want to go back to my previous position at SPU. He offered me the opportunity to start the Land Custody and Development Authority (LCDA). I accepted, as I wanted the discretion to make decisions and have the opportunity to start new things in Sarawak. I agreed to a five-year term even though there was a huge discrepancy in pay, as my previous salary with Malaysia LNG was much higher than what was offered at LCDA. When discussing this issue with Pehin Sri Taib, he mentioned that the Sarawak government would not be able to give me the same pay as I was getting in Malaysia LNG. I emphasised that I was more interested in the work and contributing to Sarawak's development than the pay. In the end, I was given the highest pay scale available at that time in the Sarawak civil service,

which was actually 2/3 less than what I received at my previous work in the private sector.

My stint at LCDA allowed me to start projects that not only served a practical purpose but also helped stimulate Sarawak's economy and provided employment opportunities during an economic downturn.

The accomplishments of LCDA during my tenure included, among others, the construction of Bangunan Satok in Kuching, Pelita Tunku in Miri, Shell's new headquarters at Lutong, Miri, and the construction of the Dewan Suarah (civic centres) in all the divisions in Sarawak. The Dewan Suarah served the practical purpose of providing a physical space for civic gatherings for the residents of the divisions, as well as employment during their construction and operations. They also became symbols of multiracial harmony and unity among Sarawakians. These are what I call value-driven change that pave the way for true and meaningful changes in our society.

When I stepped in as State Secretary, the Sarawak government was pursuing economic diversification in earnest. My time as State Secretary proved to be very challenging and in the end, a highly fulfilling endeavour.

An impactful change during my tenure in the SCS was the transformation of the native customary rights (NCR) lands as an important asset for Sarawak's economic development. Prior to this initiative, Sarawak had long depended on the timber industry for its economic growth and revenue generation. There was a need to diversify our revenue stream and consequently improve rural folks' economic standing. Our rural populations are rich in land assets with their NCR lands. However, until then, these were not economically valuable as they were not being used commercially. If we were to uplift the standard of living of the rural landowners, we needed to help make their most valuable asset -their NCR lands - more economically useful and viable.

The idea we had at that time was to transform these idle lands into commercial oil palm plantations. To do this, we encountered major challenges that required dedication and persistence among us, the civil servants as well as our political leaders, to convince the NCR landowners of the benefits they stand to get from the programme. It was a tough task as we faced opposition from several quarters. I believe that the people saw the sincerity of the political

leaders as well as the hard work, patience and persistence of the civil servants, and these were the major factors that convinced them.

As State Secretary, I often attended the Federal government's cabinet meetings with our Chief Minister. I recalled one meeting in Kuala Lumpur when the then Prime Minister Mahathir made the decision to halt the opening of oil palm plantations in Malaysia due to pressure from non-governmental organisations (NGOs). I wrote a note to the Chief Minister to plead with the Prime Minister to make an exception for Sarawak as we had just started with our oil palm industry. Thankfully, Pehin Sri Taib was an adroit champion for Sarawak's economic diversification and he was able to convince the Prime Minister that Sarawak must be exempted from this policy for a number of years.

The then Prime Minister Mahathir relented and allowed Sarawak to continue its plantation development. This decision had far-reaching effects on the State's economy. The revenue generated by the oil palm industry was immense and played a crucial role in funding various development projects. Not only did the industry provide jobs for Sarawakians and even non-Malaysians, but it also created employment opportunities in the spin-off sectors such as transportation services and other related sectors.

I, and majority of our civil servants at that time, personally expended time and relentless efforts to go down to the ground and talk to the people to reassure them that the government was not taking their lands away from them. I remember one situation when I was trying to convince the residents of Suai-Niah communities to relocate to new longhouses. Initially, the residents were reluctant to leave, fearing they would lose their land. I patiently explained to them, going back to have dialogues with them several times to ease their concerns on losing their rights to their lands. Instead, they would have the benefits of relocating to new and improved longhouses, along with enjoying essential amenities like roads, electricity and water supply, and schools for their children. Finally, the residents agreed to the move and the plantations were developed and commenced operations. The economic benefits that the longhouse folks started enjoying until today include annual dividends from the companies running the plantations as well as employment opportunities and scholarship funds for their children's education.

Today, the economic transformation brought about by the palm oil industry is evident in the improved living conditions of the locals. Many longhouses, previously in a state of disrepair, have been replaced with new ones, providing better living conditions for the residents. The building of roads and bridges has also contributed to the development and accessibility of remote areas, enabling more economic opportunities.

The plantation industry has not only provided employment but also offered a permanent and stable source of income for the locals. Unlike the timber industry, which often results in environmental damage and short-lived employment, the palm oil industry offers more long-term benefits.

The permanence of the oil palm industry, as opposed to the transient nature of timber extraction, positively impacted Sarawak's economy. Unlike timber logging, which left behind destruction and limited job opportunities, oil palm plantations provided sustainable employment throughout various stages, from land clearance to ongoing maintenance. This contrast between timber and oil palm prompted the Chief Minister then (Pehin Sri Taib) to regulate timber logging, preventing further damage to the environment.

It was also during my term as State Secretary that the Sarawak government made a decision to tap the economic potential of Sarawak's tourism industry. This was another tough call as during that time, there were practically no hotels or resorts of international standards in the State. The government wanted to develop tourism in the State, but without adequate facilities and products, we could not attract tourists. On the other hand, local businesses would not invest in building the necessary tourism facilities when there were no tourists coming in and thus no established market for them. It was thus up to the government to invest in the relevant facilities to catalyse the development of the tourism industry.

We also noticed then that the federal Tourism Board's promotion of Malaysia at that time was ineffective in capturing people's attention and generating interest in Sarawak's tourist attractions. So, we made the bold decision to set up our own Sarawak Tourism Board. This decision to be more proactive in marketing our tourism assets faced criticism from the Minister of Tourism Malaysia at that time. Despite the challenges, we managed to successfully develop and promote Sarawak's tourism products. An example is the now

globally famous “Rainforest World Music Festival”. When we first had the idea to launch this event, we encountered several challenges; one of which was the high cost of transporting foreign talents to and from Sarawak. We managed to convince Malaysia Airlines to work with us at that time. I believe that the Rainforest World Music Festival can continue to evolve and become an even more successful event especially in today’s digital era.

These initiatives underscore the importance of responsible and regulated economic endeavours and for the government to engage the private sector as its active partner in achieving our development agenda. In a developing country such as ours, a government has no choice but to play an active role in business. It’s the old vicious cycle of the chicken and the egg: the government wants to develop an industry, but cannot do so without the active involvement of the private sector. On the other hand, the private sector often cannot afford to invest heavily in an industry that has not been developed yet. The government, therefore, needs to pioneer or spearhead the development of an industry before the private sector will invest in it.

The government can undertake to lead development but more and more, we have to work together in partnership with the private sector. To align the civil service closer to that sense of partnership, there was a need to shift from an administrative to a more **development and management-oriented civil service**.

This started the paradigm shift among civil servants from being administrators to becoming development managers. Formerly, civil servants may have been rather uncomfortable about dealing with the private sector because they were unfamiliar with the procedures, terms and the jargon in the business environment. As we sought to work with the private sector and bring in capital from both domestic and international investors, we needed to learn to talk the same language, and have access to the same knowledge and competencies as those in the private sector to achieve our development goals.

This paradigm shift led to us adopting the tenets and principles of quality. In order to effectively engage the private sector as partners in the development process, we needed to provide quality services. By continually providing quality and valuable service to the private sector, we enable them to perform with greater efficiency and productivity. For example, the Water Board is not

merely responsible for providing water, but pure, clean, pollutant-free water to enable people (i.e. the workforce) to live healthily, factories to produce quality products, and businesses to run smoothly.

We intensified efforts to promote quality awareness and mindfulness among all civil servants across the board. The quality management processes we adopted, such as ISO certification and 5S helped us identify and eliminate steps that are counterproductive or cause delays. We also adopted new systems and processes that helped us reduce defects, repetition and rework in our operations. We exerted efforts to harmonise and coordinate our quality initiatives with those of the private sector, ensuring that these are aligned and truly facilitate or enhance the implementation of our development programmes and projects. Our goal then was to increase the rate at which we were able to do our tasks right the first time.

As development managers, this meant that the onus is on us to be more proactive in continuously improving and upgrading our work processes and not be deterred by the obstacles that come our way when we are pursuing our development agenda for the State.

We are undeniably fortunate here in Sarawak. With abundant resources, a vibrant culture, and favourable weather conditions, Sarawakians are considered among the luckiest in the world. Unlike many regions affected by typhoons, earthquakes and other natural calamities, Sarawak remains sheltered, allowing us to live in peace without any anxiety due to unpredictable weather or natural calamities. Additionally, our State is blessed with vast natural resources, from our forests to our lands and marine resources. What is needed in Sarawak are what I call “champions” for Sarawak’s development. This is the role that the political leaders and the civil servants play.

Sarawak is truly fortunate to have abundant resources. However, we will not progress unless the mindset of the people which has traditionally been quite insular and colloquial, changes. Even today, it is not uncommon to hear individuals proclaim that support should be given exclusively to Sarawakians. While it is reasonable to prioritise assistance for the local population, this support should be contingent upon their abilities and capabilities. Giving opportunities to individuals who are not equipped to handle them not only

does them a disservice but also hampers the progress of the State. The stress caused by their inability to fulfil their responsibilities inevitably impacts productivity, potentially leading to missed opportunities for growth and development.

I often stressed during my time as State Secretary that the people of Sarawak, led by the civil servants, need to “quantum leap” in their ability to change and adapt to changes. We have no choice but to learn to manage the constantly changing local and global environment in a way that best serves the State and its people. Without change, there can be no progress. And so, we must “welcome change as a rule but not as a ruler.” Instead we must be change riders, who like the rodeo driver, exploit the horse’s strength and unpredictability to achieve his goal. A change rider exploits change to their advantage.

The key to accomplishing this is embedding the continuous learning culture within the Sarawak civil service.

One of the first things I did as State Secretary was to secure four seats at Harvard Kennedy School for our top civil servants. The purpose of sending individuals to Harvard was twofold: to expose them to the global environment beyond Sarawak and to foster a culture of learning and innovation. However, the decision was met with criticism and opposition, with some ministers questioning the high cost involved.

One minister even suggested that instead of sending individuals to Harvard, I should just invite Harvard professors to Malaysia. This assumed that the professors could then educate a larger group of people. I argued, however, that the immersive experience at Harvard, with students from all over the world, was invaluable. The culture of reading and constant engagement with professors and peers cannot be replicated by simply bringing in professors to deliver lectures. There are several reasons why I pushed for the plan to send our top civil servants to the Harvard Kennedy School.

One is the broadened understanding of the political landscape that our civil service leaders would acquire. Attending the Harvard Kennedy School would provide them with a deep understanding of political systems, structures and processes. This knowledge would enable them to navigate the complexities

of politics more effectively, and develop strategies that align with the specific needs and dynamics of our political environment.

It will also help our civil service leaders to establish networks and connections among their peers, professors and alumni who have vast experience in politics and public policy. These connections can prove valuable in managing politicians and developing effective strategies, as their cohorts in other countries will be able to provide insights, guidance and support.

Analytical and problem-solving skills are crucial for our SCS leaders to have. The Harvard Kennedy School emphasises rigorous analysis, evidence-based decision-making, and critical thinking. Such skills can be valuable in managing politicians and devising strategies. By analysing political situations and challenges using a well-informed, data-driven approach, the SCS leaders would be better equipped to understand the motivations of politicians and devise strategies to achieve desired outcomes. The SCS leaders' experience at the school would enhance their ability to communicate effectively, build consensus, and negotiate with politicians to achieve policy objectives.

I feel gratified whenever I meet civil servants I worked with in the past who remain avid learners and keep abreast with new ideas and competencies. Some of them can even match the digital competencies of the much younger digital natives today because they have never stopped learning and are excited to gain new skills and competencies. This is an important quality for all our civil servants to have.

Speaking of digital competencies, it was during my term as State Secretary that we started focusing on Information Technology (IT). The IT revolution has started sweeping the global arena and there was a need for us to catch up in our use and applications of technology in our systems and work operations. We saw IT as a way to improve the effectiveness of our service delivery and reduce bureaucracy.

We formed the State IT Council (SITC) to closely coordinate all ICT development within the civil service. There was a standardisation of ICT applications and technology among the users in the civil service. An ICT master plan study was undertaken in 1992 and Sarawak Information Systems Sdn. Bhd. (SAINS) was set up as an in-house ICT solutions provider.

I remembered how progress in this area had been slow due to the lack of the right competencies among our civil servants. This issue was evident in the efforts to introduce technological advancements and improve communication within government departments. There was a lack of champions, and individuals within each department who would promote and drive the use of new technologies. SAINS then played a role in digitising processes and encouraging computer usage in government departments. This responsibility should have been shouldered by each individual department. Every department should have had a champion advocating for the use of computers and ensuring that their staff received proper training. Waiting for external entities to teach them was not an effective approach. Rather, departments should have competed among themselves to be the first to master various applications and technologies.

Civil servants were also encouraged to make use of facilities such as the state-of-the-art State Library in Kuching, and its branches in major towns as well as distance and online learning activities, as part and parcel of the continuous learning culture within the civil service.

Another notable achievement I take pride in is the perception of Kuching as a clean and healthy city. Although improvements are still needed, we managed to raise awareness and establish a positive image for the city. I do wish that this “clean city” initiatives are maintained through the years not only in Kuching, but in other places in Sarawak.

In today's civil service, one crucial aspect that seems to be lacking is a sense of orientation. Orientation, in this context, refers to setting the right sense of purpose for civil servants. It appears that many new civil servants are unsure of their purpose within their respective roles.

Take, for example, the role of a clerk or a receptionist. What is their purpose? When someone approaches them, seeking assistance, do they truly understand their role and purpose? Often, the interaction between a receptionist and a visitor is merely transactional. The receptionist asks if they can be of assistance, the visitor states his/her purpose, and the receptionist instructs him/her to wait. This is far from ideal.

An ideal scenario would involve the receptionist finding out where the person she is assisting needs to go, whether the person they are meeting is ready

to see them, and then escorting him/her to his/her destination. However, it is rare to find such proactive assistance in offices nowadays. The same goes for clerical roles, such as those in immigration departments. Instead of ensuring that an individual can read and understand a form before filling it out, the clerk may simply hand them the form and expect them to complete it unaided.

In essence, civil servants should be aware that their purpose is to serve the public. To serve means to help people, and this applies to everything from completing forms to guiding individuals through bureaucratic procedures. If someone needs assistance completing a form, a civil servant should sit beside him/her and patiently guide him/her until the task is completed. If a fee is required and the person does not have enough money to pay the fee, the civil servant should find a way to assist him/her, such as perhaps lending him/her the money rather than asking him/her to come back another day, especially if the person comes from a relatively far area.

Unfortunately, this level of service is often lacking. Some civil servants believe that their purpose is fulfilled by simply providing the necessary forms or information. They need to recognise that as civil servants, their duty is to help individuals until they achieve their objectives. There is a significant gap between the expectation of public service and the reality of what is currently being delivered.

The tourism industry serves as a glaring example of the contrast. For example, when asking hotel staff in Thailand where the washroom is, they will not only give directions but also escort guests to the location. However, in Malaysia, the usual response is a mere gesture or nod towards the general direction. This lack of assistance is similarly observed in government departments, where civil servants can make the situation worse rather than alleviating it.

So, what is the solution? First and foremost, there must be a comprehensive orientation program for new civil servants. From day one, they should be made aware of the expectations and responsibilities placed upon them by both their superiors and the public they serve. They should understand that their purpose extends beyond imposing rules and regulations. Instead, their primary role is to assist anyone who seeks their help.

Implementing such a change requires dialogue and communication among

civil servants. They need to constantly remind each other of their true purpose and sense of duty as public servants. Moreover, civil servants must possess not only knowledge but also intelligence, high integrity, empathy, compassion, and a caring nature to effectively assist individuals from diverse backgrounds and with various needs, issues or challenges who come to them for assistance.

In Sarawak's aspiration to become a leading economic force in the region, a quality-managed civil service organisation, whose staffs are imbued with dignity, integrity, professionalism, humility and kind and caring qualities, is an important pillar that supports our overall efforts in ensuring our country's rightful place as a well-respected member of the developed world.⁶

Tan Sri Datuk Amar (Dr) Haji Hamid Bin Bugo

served in the following capacities as a civil servant:

- Assistant Secretary and Administrative Officer at the State Planning Unit, Chief Minister's Department (1971 – 1977);
- General Manager, Land Custody and Development Authority (PELITA);
- Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Resource Planning (1988 – 1990);
- Deputy State Secretary (1990 – 1991);
- State Secretary (1992 – 2000);
- Currently, he is the Chairman of PETROS Berhad.



DATU DR HATTA BIN SOLHI

■ began my journey with the Sarawak Civil Service (SCS) in the mid-1960s, shortly after Malaysia gained its independence, as a Sarawak Administrative Officer (SAO) at Miri District Office. I had the privilege of working under the guidance of the Resident – a colonial officer from the British Government – and a local district officer named (Tan Sri) Safri Awang Zaidell.

In those days, working conditions in the District Office were far from ideal. We were provided with only wooden chairs and desks, ceiling fans and long wooden benches for members of the public who came to meet us. The lack of modern amenities, such as electricity and running water in government quarters added to the arduous nature of our workplace.

I was posted to Miri after completing a one-month induction course at the Civil Service Training Centre in Kuching. It was an excellent course for newly recruited civil servants covering financial regulation and procedure; Civil Service Code of Conduct; local laws and customs; and basic law of contract. It was useful as it gave us some ideas on the workings of government machineries, as well as the customs of the various ethnic groups in the State.

My duty as a SAO focused on meeting the people, both in our office and their homes, and listening to their problems and requests and thereby looking for ways to resolve them as soon as possible. During frequent visits to the villages and longhouses, the SAO was required to update changes in the population, such as new births and deaths as well as any addition to the longhouse structure or new houses in the village. It was the duty of the SAO to keep the information about the villages and longhouses under his jurisdiction up-to-date for easy reference and planning of the village development. Thus the files/ records of all villages/longhouses to be visited must be brought along during the SAO's visitation. To prevent the files from getting wet, especially when travelling using boats, these files were kept in a big tin, and thus the name "The Tin System", which is equivalent to our computer today in terms of record keeping.

Apart from that, the SAO was always a key player in any social events and activities organised by the government at the divisional and district level. These events, in addition to bringing the people together to have fun, were also avenues to disseminate information and get feedbacks on government

policies from the people. Among them were the divisional Merdeka Day celebration, a very important event which gave people at the divisional and district levels the opportunity to celebrate independence day together with fellow Malaysians throughout the country, as well as to instil in them a sense of loyalty and pride in the country's achievement. Currently, the Merdeka Day celebration is centred in Kuching or in one of the divisional headquarters in any year, as a result people in other divisions are not involved in such an important national event. As an event manager at the divisional or district level, the important role of the SAO as a channel of communication between the State government and the people could not be overstated.

I was given the opportunity to serve for one month in the sub-district of Subis, which came under Miri District. Bekenu, where the office was located, was a very small town with only two rows of wooden shophouses selling essential goods to all villages and longhouses within the sub-district. Serving in a sub-district office gave the SAO many challenges; he has to be a leader of all government staff in the Sub-district, to be confident and able to make fast decision and implement it. Due to the lacks of good transport infrastructure at that time, the journey from Miri to Bekenu took five hours by boat in the open sea. The absence of telephone made the task of an SAO more challenging as he could not consult his boss easily before making a decision; the only means of communication was by telegram and letters, and these mode took time. Today, with the development of good road system, the same journey took only 45 minutes to an hour by motor vehicles.

The challenges we faced were daunting, as the sub-district lacked all the basic infrastructure and amenities, causing restriction in our movements to visit villages and longhouses. I could vividly recall a big flood that affected the sub-district towards the end of 1965, when all communication with the settlements in the upriver area was cut off. Yet, I took a bold move to visit several settlements. Together with a police sergeant and a boat driver, we went in a longboat to visit these settlements just to see how the people were doing and to inform them that the authority had not forgotten them. I had the feeling that the people were delighted to see us, even though we did not provide them with food basket and mineral water, as is the norm today.

In spite of all the short-comings, our commitment to the job was unwavering, driving us to navigate through the difficult times and numerous challenges. Personal comfort never crossed our minds. Instead, we focused on the tasks at hand, conducting regular visits to longhouses and other rural villages informing villagers of government policies and getting feedbacks from them, as well as trying to resolve urgent issues that were brought to our attention. Despite the lack of a good mode of transportation and the danger posed by the threat of communism, we still carried on our tasks to the best of our capability.

After one year of service as an administrative officer, I got a lot of experience working with the people and providing basic services to them. More importantly, I got to know about the basic characteristics of being a good civil servant during those early years after independence.

One of these, I believe, is discipline. It played a major part in instilling a sense of duty among us despite the hardships we encountered then as civil servants. Discipline is a crucial aspect of the civil service, as an agency of the government of the day. Thus, it was greatly emphasised during our initial training and reinforced in the office, especially by the colonial Residents and local district officers at that time. I can recount several stories that highlighted the importance of adhering to strict rules and regulations guiding the behaviour of civil servants. For example, no head of department can leave his station on weekends without the permission of the Resident. This was to ensure that the people had access to any officer for advice or assistance at any time, whenever there was a need.

Similarly, punctuality, being an integral part of discipline, was being strictly adhered to by heads of department and agencies. We did not have clocks to mark our working hours back then. Instead, it was expected that everyone would arrive promptly at 8.00am and stay until their designated time to leave. Punctuality was also emphasised when it came to meetings. If a meeting was scheduled to begin at 9.00am, the door would be closed promptly at that time, and latecomers were not permitted entry, unless they could give a valid reason for being late. Even high-ranking officials, including heads of department, had to abide by this rule. If they were not in attendance, they were expected to

write a letter to the State Secretary or whoever chaired the meeting explaining their absence.

I have a strong feeling that discipline and punctuality in many public agencies have changed in recent times. With the introduction of the clock-in system and duties outside the office, there is more flexibility in working hours. But it is essential to strike a balance between flexibility and a disciplined work ethic so that people who come to meet us in the office can be attended to promptly and their problems or concerns be addressed satisfactorily.

Barely a year into the job, I received a letter from the State Secretary Office offering me a Colombo Plan Scholarship to pursue a bachelor's degree in public administration and social science in Canada. Though I began to like my job as an SAO, I could not pass on the opportunity, so I resigned and took up the scholarship offer to continue my studies, improve my knowledge, and gain useful experience to live in a different country. I was very thankful for the scholarship which had enabled me to further my education in the field of public administration in a foreign university. I spent four fruitful years in Ottawa, Canada, obtaining knowledge not only through lecture theatres and classrooms, but also interactions with many students from the host country and other countries.

The four years spent in Ottawa was very fruitful, but not without numerous challenges, especially culture shock and the extremely cold climate. It also made me realise what development really meant: that Canada was an example of a fully developed country where the people enjoyed a high standard of living, with modern transport infrastructures connecting many cities and towns in the country, excellent healthcare facilities including hospitals and clinics, public utilities such as piped water, electricity and telephone, and even colour television in every home. Just in the State of Ontario alone, there were already more than ten public universities, compared to only one in Malaysia then. I began to realise that there was a big gap in terms of physical and socio-economic development between Canada and Malaysia, especially Sarawak. We needed to work extra hard to catch up and reduce the gap and thereby improve the living condition of our people.

Upon my return, I realised that Sarawak needed to invest heavily in its development programmes, especially in road infrastructures, schools, hospitals, clean water and electricity, to be on par with developed countries like Canada. With the newly found enthusiasm gained from the four years abroad, I was ready to be taken back into the administrative service to continue serving the State and community. Unfortunately, there was no opening or new recruitment in that year, but there was an opening for the post of Rural Sociologist in the Department of Agriculture (DOA); I applied for the job and got accepted.

This opportunity opened up my mind to the fascinating field of social development, mainly to assist rural people to develop themselves and their communities and surroundings. When I reported to the director of the department – one of the few remaining colonial officers then – he told me to write my own job description and plan of action. In effect, he was entrusting me with the huge responsibility of contributing my knowledge to help the people to develop and prepare them mentally for their own improvement. As this was a new position in DOA, it took me a few days to write the Term of Reference; I needed to do some literature search and talk to a number of colleagues who were familiar with the field of rural social development.

It was a big challenge for me, but I was also willing to learn from others who were involved in some ways in social development of rural communities. My colleagues in the department were helpful, but no one was fully able to specify the role of the sociologist and how he could contribute as a team member of a highly technical agency in its objective to help the people improve their productivity and livelihood. Through my search, I found out that one agency that had been involving the people in development planning and implementation was Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA). I managed to get an attachment with the organisation for around two weeks to learn about how to get the people to participate in the development process for their own benefit. This involved talking and explaining to the target group, creating awareness and understanding of the benefits and risks of any new project proposed by the government, and thereby convincing them of the potential gains.

Reflecting on my contributions to the civil service in the first year in the department, one notable achievement was my involvement in starting the socio-economic unit in DOA. Here, I had the opportunity to work alongside economists and other professionals. Together, we conducted baseline socio-economic studies to provide crucial data for planning of development projects to meet the needs of local communities. These studies allowed us to understand the socio-economic environment and needs of the communities we were serving, enabling us to make informed recommendations for development projects. Notably, this work was conducted by ourselves, not by consultants from the private sector or universities, emphasising the level of trust and responsibility bestowed upon us. In this way too, we could understand the local community better and empathise with them.

After a year in DOA, I got another offer of a scholarship to do a master's degree in social development at University of Reading, United Kingdom. The course was tailor-made for practitioners from all Commonwealth countries who worked to improve the living condition of rural people. It was an excellent course and very relevant to equip me and (others) for a career as a rural sociologist. I gained a lot of knowledge and experience, not only through theories taught by lecturers, but also discussions and interactions with more experienced course-mates from other developing countries. The one year spent at the university was invaluable; it gave me not only the knowledge and skills to do my job, but also the confidence as a rural sociologist.

On my return to Sarawak, I was assigned to be a Counterpart Sociologist attached to a Danish consultant team which undertook a feasibility study of the Miri-Bintulu-Long Lama project. I was assigned to work with two very experienced sociologists in the team – one from England and the other from the United States (US). The consultant team consisted of various disciplines, namely economists (the project leader was an economist), soil scientist, infrastructure engineers, physical and town planners, agriculturist and sociologists. I was assigned by the consultant sociologists to carry out socio-economic studies of certain local communities within the Miri-Bintulu region, including the urban Malays, Kedayan and Orang Miriek. These reports were then written and discussed with the consultant sociologists who incorporated some salient points in their main reports. It was a very useful experience

for me to be able to work with very experienced professionals in the field of development. It actually deepened my interest in rural development as a career, as it offered an opportunity to help rural people to improve themselves.

Upon completion of my secondment with the Miri-Bintulu study, I was posted back to DOA. Shortly after settling down in my job in the socio-economic unit, I was again assigned to work in the Padi Production Unit that was newly set-up in the Ministry of Agriculture.

The main objective of the Unit was to identify and study all areas in the State with potential for large-scale paddy farming. The State Government aimed to achieve self-sufficiency in rice within the next two decades. It was staffed with local officers from DOA, Land and Survey Department (LSS) and Department of Irrigation and Drainage (DID). Our scope of work included identifying big areas with potential for paddy cultivation based on semi-detailed soil surveys, the need for road and drainage infrastructures, and source of water for irrigation, as well as undertaking social and economic studies. We were tasked to produce comprehensive reports that considered technical, social and economic factors relevant for large-scale paddy production that could improve the level of rice self-sufficiency in the State and at the same time enhance the living condition of paddy farmers. That was a big task for us, young local officers, but we took up the challenge.

The team under the supervision of the Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture managed to produce several volumes of technical reports as well as social and economic reports for presentation to the Director of the State Planning Unit (SPU). A series of discussions chaired by the Director among top officials and researchers followed before the reports were finalised for presentation to the State Cabinet. We were informed that the Cabinet agreed with most of the recommendation of the report, but could not agree to its immediate implementation, especially the big areas of Bijat Stumbin and Limbang Valley projects due to the estimated heavy capital investment for the drainage and irrigation, as well as infrastructure and agricultural machineries required. Rather, the Cabinet agreed that the focus should be to develop smaller areas of existing paddy land (between 200-500 acres) by DOA and DID using the annual allocated budget. Following this decision, many of these

existing paddy land were provided with parameter drains and bunds, as well as water gates. However, due to a number of factors, especially less emphasis given by the Government on rice self-sufficiency policy after the year 2000, most of these infrastructures were not maintained and became dysfunctional. More lucrative cash crops, such as oil palm, sweet corns, fruit trees and vegetables, were eventually planted on many of these areas.

These two experiences taught me the importance of working as a team and interdisciplinary collaboration in the planning and implementation of development projects. We must use our professional training and provide relevant inputs to the project planning process. The planning of any mega project must take into account the various factors that could impact the success of the project, including physical, environment, social and economic viability. At the same time, we could not ignore the interest of the target group, especially the possible impact and their involvement to ensure the success of these projects.

These were rewarding experiences for me. It further ignited my interest in the discipline of development studies, which was new in the Sarawak civil service at that time. I applied for a scholarship from the East-West Center, a US educational institution to pursue a PhD at the University of Hawai'i. After undergoing a series of interviews, I was accepted. I was grateful that the State Government approved my application for a four-year study leave with pay to pursue my further education there.

Life was tough as a full-time student during the first few months. Staying in the hostel without the support of my family was indeed a difficult adjustment. But meeting and mixing with students from many countries in the Asia Pacific region, changing my lifestyle, and committing myself to complete the PhD programme did help to minimise the many challenges encountered. Before I realised it, time flew very fast; after two years in Hawai'i, I was back in Sarawak to undertake my fieldwork for my dissertation. I chose to study the paddy farming communities of Bijat Stumbin and Tanjung Purun DID schemes, both areas I was familiar with, having studied them during my assignment with the Padi Production Unit.

On returning to Sarawak in early 1984 after completing my PhD, I was surprised and delighted that I got posted to the State Planning Unit (SPU) of the Chief Minister's Department. I was designated as a Principal Assistant Secretary in charge of Poverty and Restructuring. Being in the Planning Unit was ideal for me as my previous experiences with the Miri-Bintulu Study Project and Padi Production Unit, in addition to the knowledge acquired during my further study in Hawai'i, could be very useful to work as a member of a multidisciplinary planning organisation.

The academic exposure in development studies gave me the conviction that crucial attention to the social aspect of development cannot be overlooked. A holistic approach that considers the social, economic, and environmental factors involved is necessary to craft our development strategies. This was what I emphasised when I was the Director of SPU. I served the unit for more than ten years, including as the director for about eight years.

SPU (now Economic Planning Unit Sarawak) was the nerve centre of development planning activities at the State level. It reported directly to the Chief Minister (now Premier of Sarawak) and the State Secretary. It was the counterpart or equivalent to the Economic Planning Unit at the Federal level. It should be the reservoir for all relevant socio-economic and resource data of the State and the main source of economic forecasting. All development plans, such as the five-year and longer termed plans should come from SPU. Sectoral plans such as agriculture development and road infrastructure plans could come from the respective ministries, but must be presented and discussed with the unit before being brought to the Cabinet for approval.

Similarly, all major socio-economic and development studies in the State needed to be approved and coordinated by SPU. Reports must be discussed and endorsed by the unit before they could be implemented and provided with the necessary budget. Ministries and Departments must use the findings and recommendations of these studies to prepare their Five-Year Development Plan, as well as action plans when requesting the budget for the coming year. It would be a waste of resources and time if these reports were not fully utilised, and just being kept in the libraries of these various agencies. However, SPU should not be involved with project implementation, instead it could be tasked to monitor the progress of major projects being carried out.

After SPU, I had a short stint as the Director of Yayasan Sarawak. The task was very different from my previous experience in DOA and SPU. It was a small agency then and mainly involved in encouraging and sponsoring good Sarawakian students to study in selected boarding schools in Peninsular Malaysia, as well as providing financial loans and scholarships to Sarawakian students to further their studies at the tertiary level. Now Yayasan Sarawak is a matured agency, not only as a provider of loans and scholarship to deserving students, but also the owner of a few private universities, colleges and private international schools. This investment in human resource development, especially in technical and scientific fields, is critical for Sarawak to progress towards a developed region, based on the digital and green economy. The experience in Yayasan Sarawak, although for only two years as the director and several years as a board member developed my interest in higher education, and I believe this experience gave me an edge when I was appointed as the first Chairman of the Board of Directors of Curtin University Malaysia in Miri.

During my tenure as Deputy State Secretary, there were numerous new developments, such as ICT advancement, tourism and industrial development. It was essential to facilitate these new initiatives while ensuring that the rest of the civil service could effectively adapt and perform their new roles.

Around this time, our role as civil servants began to shift. We were no longer solely responsible for administrative tasks, but were expected to understand and facilitate business processes involved in our industrial, tourism and manufacturing sectors, as well as other economic development projects of the Government. This shift posed a challenge for many of us, as it required a change in our thinking and approach. Creating an environment conducive to ease of doing business is crucial for attracting private sector investment and enhancing economic growth.

As civil servants, it is essential for us to adapt to new thinking and approaches to ensure that we can effectively facilitate the involvement of the private sector to invest in the State. These include actively collaborating with stakeholders, and implementing measures to simplify and expedite the approval process; thus a one-stop working taskforce under the chairmanship of the State Financial Secretary was established. This taskforce consisted of heads of both Federal and State departments and agencies, and its role was to discuss

any application received from the private sector to invest and undertake commercial projects in the State, and to make fast decision. These are necessary steps towards creating an environment that promotes and supports the private sector's involvement in national development. I hope the issue of 'ease of doing business' in Sarawak is now a thing of the past, as we have to compete with our neighbouring countries to attract foreign investment.

Adopting a customer-centric work culture in SCS, we carried out initiatives such as the implementation of total quality management (TQM) principles and ISO standards in our operations. Initiatives like Quality Control Circles (QCC) and Client Charter were introduced to improve processes and quality of the services rendered, as well as to encourage innovation. Computerisation was also implemented, aiming to streamline processes, improve efficiency, and potentially decrease the number of civil servants required to perform certain tasks.

We worked tirelessly to maintain order and reduce confusion among internal staff due to the many changes in our roles, tasks and operations. Adopting a customer-centric mindset, we also paid attention to lessening the number of complaints among our external clients, establishing a dedicated complaint bureau and a faster response system. It is crucial to assess public feedback and resolve their problems in a timely manner to improve public perception of the civil service.

Another major change that civil servants had to navigate after the formation of Malaysia was the new dynamics in the relationship between politicians and the civil service. The civil service is a complex structure that aims to provide continuity and expertise in governance, while membership of the political arm of the government may change totally after each election. Within this system of governance where politicians from the winning party (or coalition of parties) could assume executive role, conflicts and new challenges are bound to arise. One such conflict is the clash between instructions from immediate civil service officers and those from the legislative arm of the Government. Some politicians believed that civil servants were mere followers of their instructions, neglecting the existence of rules and regulations that govern the civil service. However, as civil servants, they were expected to remain impartial and politically neutral in trying to do their tasks to serve the interests of the people.

For instance, matters related to transfer, posting and promotion of civil servants are to be decided and approved by the Public Service Commission, upon the recommendation of a team led by the State Secretary based on certain set of criteria of performance and experience. No political consideration should come in. This helps to ensure transparency and fairness in the system. Senior civil servants must be able to navigate this challenge well, so that they could maintain the trust of their staff, as well as serve the people fairly without being influenced by political consideration.

As a civil servant, one is expected to be an advisor to ministers and politicians. This means that while the final decision lies with the ministers, civil servants, with their expertise and knowledge, are responsible for advising and providing necessary information and data to facilitate the ministers to make a well-informed and fair decision. In order to navigate our relationship with politicians, open communication is essential to avoid misunderstanding and ensure effective decision-making. While the social, economic and political environment has undergone drastic changes over decades since independence, and the challenges faced by civil servants become more complex, the core mission of the service must remain more or less the same, namely to implement government policies efficiently and effectively and to serve the people with full commitment in the best way possible.

Reflecting on my journey in the civil service, I came to appreciate the importance of having a multidisciplinary approach to public service. My experiences have shown the intrinsic connection between the various academic disciplines, namely economics, sociology, political science, communication and the physical science – and how they must be properly coordinated to ensure sustainable socio-economic development for the benefit of the people. This task requires that every head of a ministry or department must be able to create a real team spirit and good working relationship among his staff members, as well as between departments and agencies. We cannot afford to work in silo.

I am grateful for the invaluable opportunities given to me to contribute, in a small way, to the development of Sarawak, thus far. More works and efforts must be undertaken and financial investment is needed to ensure that every citizen of this State is able to have a decent standard of living and access to

modern infrastructures, facilities and utilities, which half century ago were available only to people of the developed countries like Canada, Australia and the UK.

To be effective, civil servants must adhere to the motto of “An Honour to Serve” at all times. It implies, among others, that it is a privilege given to you and thus, you must serve the people with full commitment and fairness. Hence, the person occupying that position must practise good values and conduct as embedded in the Civil Service Code of Ethics. We must be ready to serve the people at any time, any place without thinking of personal gains. Lastly, I must admit I had a rewarding career in the SCS and I hope the current crop of civil servants value the opportunity given to them to serve the people and State diligently, with integrity and honour.⁶

Datu Dr Hatta Bin Solhi

served in the following capacities as a civil servant:

- Sarawak Administrative Officer, Miri District Office (1965 – 1966);
- Rural Sociologist, Department of Agriculture (1971 – 1972);
- Sociologist with Miri-Bintulu Regional Master Plan Study Team (1972 – 1974)
- Rural Sociologist, Padi Production Unit, Ministry of Agriculture Sarawak (1974 – 1977)
- Director, Malaysian Centre for Development Studies, Sarawak, Prime Minister’s Department (1977 – 1979)
- Various administrative capacities at the State Planning Unit, Chief Minister’s Department, namely Principal Assistant Secretary, Deputy Director and Director (1984 – 1995);
- Executive Director, Yayasan Sarawak (1995 – 1997);
- Deputy State Secretary, Sarawak State Government (1997 – 2001).



DATUK AMAR JAUL SAMION

Preamble

My path to civil service began unexpectedly during my studies at Universiti Malaya, where a course on development planning opened my eyes to the transformative power of public service.

The course, part of the Applied Economics curriculum, focused on creating development plans to bring progress for developing countries. What particularly captured my interest was how the discussions applied to Malaysia's development context, making the theoretical concepts tangibly relevant to our nation's growth and, in particular, the development of the rural areas.

After graduation, while serving as a temporary teacher in rural Sarawak, I harbored aspiration of becoming a Sarawak Administrative Officer (SAO). Growing up in a rural area, I had witnessed firsthand how our community respected and looked up to the Residents and District Officers. These ground administrators wielded significant influence in the community, and I dreamed of joining their ranks, knowing it would make my family and longhouse community proud. However, my dream was dashed, when I failed the interview for the job.

The Early Years

My subsequent unsuccessful attempt to secure a position as an administrator led me to join the Sarawak State Planning Unit (SPU) in 1979, which was established sixteen years after Sarawak gained independence within the Federation of Malaysia. The Unit which was set up to oversee the State's development planning was initially headed by someone from West Malaysia, which I recalled appeared as an oddity to me. I was pleased when shortly after I got the post as Assistant Secretary, Datu Dr Hatta Solhi became the first Sarawakian director of SPU.

My first significant task at SPU involved assisting the United Nations consultants studying rural poverty in Sarawak in the early 1980s. These field visits exposed me to extreme cases of poverty, showing me conditions

even more challenging than those in my own village. This experience deepened my commitment to public service and development. Under the guidance of my seniors, I helped craft the Fourth Malaysia Plan for Sarawak. This role taught me to balance the big picture of state development with detailed departmental planning, while providing invaluable experience in interacting with various government agencies. I learned to assess and assisted to consolidate different plans into a coherent state strategy, gaining a comprehensive understanding of Sarawak's development trajectory.

“Marketing” Sarawak to Foreign Investors

My career then took me to the newly-formed Ministry of Industrial Development as one of its pioneer staff in 1987, where we worked to diversify Sarawak's economy beyond its traditional reliance on forestry and mining. The ministry was ably led by YAB Datuk Patinggi (Dr) Abang Haji Abdul Rahman Zohari Bin Tun Datuk Abang Haji Openg as its first minister then. We travelled to Europe, the Silicon Valley in US and many other countries to “market” Sarawak as an emerging investment location in Malaysia and in the region. This proved to be a tough challenge as we competed with the more established investment centres in the country such as Selangor and Penang. Sama Jaya Free Industrial Zone and many other industrial estates were established in early 1990s onwards, to cater for the anticipated upsurge in both foreign and domestic investment. This prompted one international newspaper to write about Sarawak “carving an industrial estate in the Borneo jungle”. I was then charged with the responsibility as Head of Investment Promotion Division in the Ministry. Despite lacking a track record in high-tech manufacturing, we succeeded in attracting electronic industries from the US, and Japan investors in Sama Jaya through our sincere commitment to making Sarawak a favorable investment destination. Many timber-based industries were also established in Tanjung Manis, Kemena, and Kuala Baram. This sincerity, coupled with unwavering faith in Sarawak's potential, proved to be our winning approach.

Dilapidated Rural Schools

When I was appointed as Deputy State Secretary for Rural Transformation in 2016, I was delighted to directly contribute in transforming the conditions of dilapidated rural schools. My goal: no student in Sarawak's rural schools will find it hard to learn because they feel unsafe and uncomfortable in their school environment. I remember the struggles I had to go through as a young student separated from my family at a very early age. It has always been my sincere desire that no student in Sarawak will ever have to go through what I experienced just to get an education. I recalled how my classmates and I felt afraid and insecure because there were no safety or security measures in place at our school and hostel at that time due to the appalling condition of our boarding house. The first thing my team and I initiated was to study the data and a survey of the schools in Sarawak's rural areas through the Education Department. With the data we gathered, we then charted a plan to address the issues of dilapidated schools as well as upgrading school facilities. Due to the large number of schools requiring attention, and the large amount of funding required, the plan however, took some time to implement.

Native Customary Rights (NCR) Land

Aside from drawing from my own childhood experiences, I learned to put myself into the shoes of others. When we practice empathy and authenticity in our day-to-day tasks, we can observe how a particular decision, policy or action will impact the lives of the people we serve. One of the most sensitive challenges we faced involved the Native Customary Rights (NCR) lands and "Pemakai Menua, Pulau Galau" or Native Territorial Domain (NTD). As a member of the Iban community, I understood deeply how these lands represented not just property but our cultural identity and heritage.

I was deeply involved in the plan to undertake perimeter surveys of Native Customary Rights (NCR) land under Section 6 of the Sarawak Land Code and the "Pemakai Menua, Pulau Galau" initiatives, as a member, and later

as Chairman of the “Program Khas Bumiputra” (or Special Bumiputra Programme).

To address the capacity constraints that had previously hindered progress, we enhanced the Land and Survey Department’s capacities by providing more manpower and specialised equipment, resulting in the successful perimeter survey of nearly 1 million hectares of NCR land. I must say that this is the first time that Sarawak Government has undertaken the survey of native customary rights land in such a magnitude. This was later followed by the staggered survey of these lands under Section 18 of the Sarawak Land Code, which gives these lands the much-awaited Land Titles, under Phase 2 of the programme.

These initiatives significantly strengthened the native communities' legal rights over their ancestral lands while providing a foundation for sustainable future development.

Needless to say, without the support of the late Chief Minister Tun Pehin Sri Taib Mahmud and the collaborative effort of the hard-working Department of Land and Survey, this exercise would have been impossible.

The success of this programme further exemplified the transformative power of effective inter-agency collaboration in the civil service.

Equity of Service

My appointment as State Secretary in late 2019 coincided with Sarawak's ambitious push toward digital transformation under YAB Premier Datuk Patinggi Abang Johari. As the head of the civil service, I firmly upheld three core values: honesty, integrity, and empathy. I consistently emphasized that rural communities in the “ulu” areas, which lack modern infrastructure, deserved the same quality of service as their urban counterparts in Kuching and other cities and major towns. This vision materialized in our innovative "Service Sarawak" counters within the Urban Transformation Centres in

Kuching, Serian, Sri Aman, Sibuan, and Miri. These counters revolutionized government service delivery by implementing a "no wrong counter" concept, allowing citizens to access services from more than 45 government agencies at a single point. There is no need for the citizens to move from one agency to another to transact or obtain government services in these agencies. Our vision extended further: by 2030, we aim to enable most basic government services – from, birth registrations to business license renewals – to be accessible at one counter, as well as online from the comfort of people's homes, regardless of their locations in Sarawak.

Strengthening Grassroots Administration

Understanding the importance of strong community governance, we initiated a comprehensive programme to extend government services to the grassroots level. During my tenure, we oversaw the appointment of nearly 1,000 local community leaders (KMKK), many of whom had served their respective communities without having the "Sijil" or the official certificate of appointment. These appointments then enabled the KMKK to serve their community with proper authority for services required by the kampung folks in matters such as marriages, childbirth, local disputes, breach of the "adat" (native custom) and so on. While my initial plans to personally visit all rural districts were curtailed by the COVID-19 pandemic, these appointments ensured continued community engagement and connection with the government agencies, especially the Residents and District Offices. It is extremely important that grassroots administration be strengthened as it forms an important platform to address the common needs of the "small people", the ordinary kampung folks.

Crisis Management of COVID-19 Pandemic Challenge

However, just five months into my tenure as State Secretary, the COVID-19 pandemic emerged as an unprecedented challenge that would test our

resilience and adaptability. As head of the Sarawak Civil Service (SCS), I faced the complex task of maintaining essential government operations while dealing with what I often described as "double the workload with half of the human resource capacity." The situation demanded difficult decisions that often involved balancing lives against livelihoods. Each choice carried the weight of potential consequences, often triggering chain reactions of new challenges.

During this period, I was driven by what I call "compassionate fear" – not fear for personal safety, but concern for the devastating consequences that might unfold if we failed to address both the immediate crisis and its aftermath effectively. This mindset helped me rally our staff to maintain government service continuity despite the extraordinary circumstances. We could not allow the Movement Control Order (MCO) to become an excuse for service disruption.

The pandemic particularly tested our integrity systems and financial management. Every ringgit of emergency funding needed careful tracking and justification. For instance, when providing food for personnel manning checkpoints—an unexpected but necessary expense for the Police Department—we implemented strict controls to ensure funds were used solely for their intended purposes. Similarly, all financial assistance schemes developed to help citizens during the crisis underwent rigorous scrutiny despite the pressure for rapid disbursement. This commitment to procedural integrity during crisis management helped us avoid major integrity issues despite the enormous sums involved and the urgency of the situation.

Our relationship with the private sector proved crucial during this period. Facing critical shortages of essential supplies like masks and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), we initially reached out to the private sector for support. The response was overwhelming – so much so that we had to hire additional staff just to manage the incoming donations. This outpouring of support stemmed directly from the trust we had built through transparent governance and authentic leadership. Through the tremendous support of our Right Honourable Premier, who ensured robust financial backing

for our pandemic initiatives, we were able to implement comprehensive response measures. Under the strong and decisive leadership of YB Datuk Amar Douglas Uggah Embas as Chairman of the State Disaster Management Committee (SDMC), Sarawak was able to effectively coordinate its pandemic response.

Integrity Initiatives

Even while grappling with the challenges of dealing with the pandemic, we did not let up in our efforts to strengthen integrity in the SCS. YAB Premier showed his resolve to embed integrity in government processes and among its staff by immediately establishing a ministerial portfolio of Integrity and Ombudsman in his Cabinet. Following his lead, the SCS under my tenure implemented projects and activities aimed at strengthening integrity among our ranks and in our governance processes and systems.

The pandemic did not deter our commitment to strengthening integrity within the SCS. We continued and enhanced existing programmes and implemented several crucial initiatives. Introduced by my predecessor, we partnered with the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) and established the Integrity and Ombudsman Unit (UNION) and introduced Corruption Risk Management (CRM) Plans across state agencies. By 2022, 56 agencies had completed and implemented their CRM Plans.

Further, we initiated our own Certified Integrity Officers (CeIO) training program, successfully preparing 90 officers by 2022 who now serve across various government agencies. The same year, the State Secretary's Office was recognised by the MACC for its commitment to the enculturation of integrity throughout the SCS. These efforts contributed to the SCS achieving a top-four ranking in Malaysia's Public Service Anti-Corruption Ranking conducted by MACC.

Recognizing procurement as a particularly vulnerable area for corruption, we developed and implemented our own "Garis Panduan Pelaksanaan Integrity

Pact Dalam Perolehan Kerajaan Negeri" in 2020. This guideline strengthened transparency and accountability in government procurement processes. Additionally, we approved 118 positions for Integrity Units across state agencies, ensuring systematic implementation and monitoring of integrity initiatives throughout the government.

Post COVID-19 Development Strategy 2030 (PCDS 2030)

Perhaps, our most significant achievement during my tenure as State Secretary was the development of the Post COVID-19 Development Strategy 2030 (PCDS 2030). While Sarawak was still grappling with pandemic aftershocks, the Right Honourable Premier tasked us with creating a comprehensive plan to rebuild and strengthen our economy which experienced negative growth at the height of the pandemic. His visionary leadership in initiating PCDS 2030 set the foundation for Sarawak's bold economic transformation. Conducting a development planning exercise in the best of times is certainly a difficult task but even more so during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. My marching order from YAB Premier was to harness all the expertise within the SCS, the private sector, the academic and the civil society organisations to develop a plan to rebuild and restore Sarawak's economy.

This kind of planning process required an extensive collaborative effort among all the stakeholders. In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was not an easy task to draw out the sentiments, opinions, concerns and aspirations of the stakeholders which consist practically of the whole of Sarawak. We had to hold innumerable online meetings and discussions with different stakeholders. PCDS 2030 is not a normal 5-year development plan. Not only is it a robust strategy to bring Sarawak out of the economic doldrums brought about the COVID-19 pandemic, it also is a bold plan to propel and aggressively thrust Sarawak on an accelerated journey to achieve a developed-region status by 2030. Anchored on three Pillars of Economic Prosperity, Social Inclusivity

and Environmental Sustainability, PCDS 2030 is envisioned to double the State GDP, and triple the household incomes of Sarawakians by the year 2030. This was indeed a tall order that was placed on the civil service, and our implementing agencies.

Recognizing that policy alone would not suffice for such ambitious goals – which was only nine years away, we developed the first-ever Action and Implementation Plan (AIP) in our macro development planning. The AIP, built on outcome-based planning principles, provided specific roadmap for turning PCDS 2030's ambitious goals into reality.

The PCDS 2030 planning process involved more than 1,000 stakeholders from 250 organizations across public, private, and civil society sectors, accumulating over 20,000 manhours of collaborative work. The AIP, which we mainly brainstormed over virtual meetings or video conferences due to the MCO went beyond traditional policy documents, providing specific guidance for achieving these bold targets through well thought-out implementation mechanisms, timelines, and the desired outcomes narratives. We meticulously analyzed past development plans, identified gaps, assessed available resources, and anticipated future challenges. The pandemic had taught us that traditional approaches to planning were not sufficient – we needed to build resilience and adaptability into every aspect of our development strategy.

The PCDS 2030 represents more than just a recovery plan; it embodies a new approach to government planning that acknowledges the interconnectedness of economic, social, and environmental factors. It incorporates lessons from the pandemic while addressing emerging challenges like climate change and digital transformation. The strategy emphasizes not just economic growth, but sustainable and inclusive development that benefits all Sarawakians.

As I reflect on these challenging years, I'm proud of how the SCS responded to unprecedented circumstances while maintaining our commitment to integrity and public service. Our success in managing the pandemic, measured by public cooperation and trust, demonstrated the importance of transparent governance and sincere leadership. The experience reinforced my belief that

effective public service requires more than just technical competence – it demands unwavering integrity, deep empathy, and a genuine commitment to the public good. The ‘service’ in civil service indicates the primacy of serving people with a clear sense of purpose, which was why I emphasised to the Civil Servants that their three most important tasks are SERVICE, SERVICE, SERVICE!

Looking ahead, while the PCDS 2030 and its detailed AIP provide a roadmap for Sarawak's development, the true determinant of our success will be the dedication and ethical conduct of our civil servants. As new challenges emerge, from environmental concerns to technological disruption, the principles that guided us through the pandemic – integrity, transparency, and commitment to public welfare – will remain our moral compass. The future of Sarawak, shaped by the evolving roles of the government – from ensuring safety and fostering development to enhancing accessibility – relies not only on our plans and policies but also on our unwavering commitment to serving society with honesty, dedication, and compassion. The Sarawak Economic Action Council (SEAC), established in 2020 comprising Cabinet Ministers, academia, the business community and chaired by the Premier with myself as Secretary, provided crucial guidance and support throughout the strategy's formulation.

Our experience during this pandemic is a wake-up call for us to apply our critical thinking and forward-looking mindset in everything that we do. We cannot do business as usual or in the same way that we were used to. We had to anticipate possible situations that might derail our plans and develop measures to mitigate the impacts of crisis situations. This was one of the key elements we incorporated in the PCDS 2030.

The challenges facing today's civil servants, such as recovering from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and addressing the global climate change issues, are immense. Yet, while PCDS 2030 is there to guide them, the true north that will keep the Sarawak civil servants on the right path will be their

integrity and their commitment to their calling of service for society's good.

I must acknowledge the foresightedness of the YAB Premier for initiating the PCDS 2030, who envisioned the need for Sarawak to have a robust plan to overcome the adversity of the COVID-19 pandemic and to leapfrog Sarawak development into the future.

Datuk Amar Jaul Samion

served in the following capacities as a civil servant:

- Currently, Advisor (Sarawak Premier's Office) – w.e.f August 2022 till present
- State Secretary, Sarawak State Government (Aug 2019 – June 2022);
- Deputy State Secretary (Rural Transformation) (2016 – 2019);
- Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry (2002 - 2004);
- Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Modernisation of Agriculture (2004 - 2009);
- Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Land Development (2009 - 2016);
- Director of Utility, State Financial Secretary's Office
(Ministry of Finance and Public Utilities, Sarawak) (1999 – 2002);
- Principal Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Industrial Development
(Head of Resource-Based Industry Division; Head of Investment Promotion Division; Secretary,
Industrial Co-ordination Committee) (1988 – 1999);
- Assistant Secretary, State Planning Unit, Chief Minister's Department, Sarawak (1979 – 1987).



JAYL LANGUB

In 1967, I joined the Sarawak Administrative Service as a Sarawak Administrative Officer (SAO). My initial postings included Kanowit, Belaga, and Spaoh. Later, I was briefly stationed in the Limbang Resident's Office as a development officer. My primary responsibilities included coordinating and planning all development activities within the division. During that time, the use of consultants was not prevalent, as all development work was conducted by the civil service. The District Development Committee, the Divisional Development Committee, and the State Development Committee coordinated and monitored all development projects. Although the structure may have changed since then, at that time, the civil service played a dominant role in managing the country's affairs.

In those early post-independence years, politicians were not heavily involved in running the country; instead, the civil service assumed the responsibility. From the highest levels of government to the grassroots, civil servants played a crucial role in managing various sectors, such as education, healthcare, agriculture, and development. The Upriver Agents (URAs) were particularly vital in remote areas like Bario, Ba Kelalan, and Lio Matu. District and Resident Offices also played essential roles in governance and administration.

The civil service of that era enjoyed a high level of respect and trust from the public. As an SAO stationed in an outstation like Belaga, I experienced this first-hand. It was my duty to visit each village in the sub-district twice a year, interacting with the residents and addressing their concerns. Even outside office hours, I made myself available to assist people who urgently required my attention, and they could approach me at any time, even knocking on my door at home. So, in those days, there were no office hours. Our role is to attend to peoples' needs as and when they need assistance, especially in emergency matters such as medical or security issues.

The relationship between civil servants and the public was built on trust and mutual respect. The civil service was regarded as a reliable source of assistance and information. In District Offices, we utilized a system known as

the “tin system,” where each *Penghulu* (headman) kept a tin containing vital information on their respective areas. These included information such as population, births, deaths, marriages, foreigners coming to the area, security matters, and any other matter concerning the people’s welfare and security. This information was regularly updated through our regular visits with the villagers, no less than twice a year. During these face-to-face interactions, we disseminated government updates and addressed community issues, noting down any questions or problems raised. The information was compiled into reports that were forwarded to higher levels of authority for appropriate action.

Reflecting on those times, I believe we were fortunate to inherit a system from the Brooke era that encouraged personal connections and direct communication. This approach ensured that the government and its policies were effectively communicated and that the concerns of the people were heard and addressed promptly. Unfortunately, as time progressed, we lost touch with this crucial aspect of governance, opting for more technologically driven means of communication.

One of the most important development projects I saw at that time in infrastructure was the establishment of the pipe gravity field water supply system and the construction of jetties, bridges, and other road projects. Those days, all development activities were carried out through a communal effort known as “*gotong royong*”. This meant that the entire community would come together to complete the projects, and there was no need for contractors. The community worked closely with the civil service, which had a significant role in ensuring the success of these projects. This approach ensured transparency and minimized corruption, as the whole community had to actively participate in the execution and supervision of the project.

The effectiveness of the “*gotong royong*” system was even recognized by other countries. When some of my colleagues visited South Korea, they were amazed that they were also doing a system similar to our “*gotong royong*”. They were informed by the South Koreans that they had adopted that

practice from Malaysia. However, over the years, Malaysia seems to have lost its emphasis on the *gotong royong* system. Nowadays, contractors are given responsibility for infrastructure projects, bypassing the communal effort that once existed. It is indeed saddening to see the decline of a system that brought communities together and ensured integrity in development projects.

My last posting was at Majlis Adat Istiadat Sarawak until I retired in 2003. During this stint, I did research on and documented the customary laws of various indigenous communities. This task not only allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of their cultures and traditions but also shed light on the importance of preserving and promoting their way of life.

One of the last projects I worked on was the compilation of the customary laws of the Penan and non-Muslim Melanau, known as *Adat Melanau Likau*. This task proved to be truly interesting, as it provided insights into the lives of the Melanau people residing in coastal areas who primarily relied on fishing for their sustenance. The significance of their practices, especially in the face of climate change, became apparent to me during this research process. Their sustainable systems and rituals, such as the ceremony to preserve peace with the sea and the river, held the utmost importance in their culture. Witnessing the intense ceremonies and vocal outbursts that accompanied these rituals was truly mesmerizing and added to my overall enjoyment.

While compiling the customary laws, I became aware of their practical applications in conflict resolution and mediation. These laws served as a guide for settling disputes within the community. Beyond the legal aspects, the customs, traditions, and way of life of the Melanau people formed an integral part of my research. Interacting with the community provided me with valuable insights into the general aspects of their culture, such as their music, songs, and practices, which are focused on preserving and developing their resources while keeping their traditions alive. It allowed me to appreciate the importance of preserving traditional practices, particularly in the face of changing landscapes and environmental challenges.

In today's fast-paced world, there are numerous technological advancements and changes occurring across various sectors. The widespread usage of technology, such as smartphones, has revolutionized communication and connectivity. However, as we move towards a more technologically driven society, it is crucial to acknowledge that we have lost something valuable - face-to-face interactions and personal connections. These traditional approaches allowed for a deeper understanding of the needs and concerns of the public, which is essential in governance.

For me, in all the changes that the civil service has gone through, it is important to acknowledge and address the issues pertaining to the relationship between politicians and civil servants. Both play a crucial part in shaping the direction of our society.

One problem that arises is when civil servants are forced to adhere to a political party's agenda, disregarding the greater good and compromising the integrity of the civil service. To address this issue, it is imperative for civil servants, especially those in senior positions, to exhibit leadership in terms of integrity.

Integrity should be the cornerstone of the civil service, starting from the top. It is essential to stand up for what is right and not simply acquiesce to any political pressure. The primary focus should be the country rather than the government itself. Support should be given to the government only if it genuinely serves the interests of all communities, not just a select few.

Integrity can be maintained by building strong relationships with the public and recognizing that civil servants have a responsibility to serve the people. The welfare of citizens should be of the utmost concern for civil servants. It is paramount to remember that integrity lies in serving the people, not just one's employer or political affiliations.

The most rewarding experience for me as a civil servant is gaining the trust of the people through direct communication and interactions with them.

The personal connections established fostered a strong bond between the government and the people. These traditional approaches allowed for a deeper understanding of the needs and concerns of the public, which is essential in governance. We must not lose this strong tradition in the Sarawak civil service.⁶

Jayl Langub

served in the following capacities as a civil servant:

- Sarawak Administrative Officer (SAO);
- Principal Assistant Secretary, State Planning Unit (SPU);
- Secretary of the Majlis Adat Istiadat;
- Senior Research Fellow in Dayak Studies at the Institute of East Asian Studies (IEAS), Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), now known as Institute of Borneo Studies.



DATO SRI JOSEPH KONG TED CHONG

joined the civil service as an Agriculture Officer in the Department of Agriculture Sarawak in March 1962. Prior to this, I was awarded the Colombo Plan Scholarship to pursue Bachelor of Agricultural Science at the University of Adelaide, South Australia in 1961.

I remember very well the type of practical training the potential scholars had to undergo before we were sent overseas to do the agricultural science course. In those early days, prior to our departure for our studies overseas, we had to work like any other daily paid workers for a couple of months at Semongok Agriculture Station and Tarat Agriculture Station. The work involved maintenance of a fruit nursery, marcotting of fruit trees, budding of fruit trees, budding of rubber seedlings, selection of coconut seedlings, keeping of cattle, pigs and poultry, freshwater fish keeping and many other farm chores. This kind of practical attachment may sound ridiculous but those of us who have undergone such a stint of attachment treasure the opportunity given to us to know and experience some aspects of the work involved in farming under local conditions and also to appreciate and acquire the working ethics of the workers.

I was the first Sarawakian to graduate with a degree in agriculture and so, I was appointed as an Agriculture Officer. I was assigned at the Department Headquarters for two weeks, spending a couple of days in each of the sections, to familiarise myself with the work involved. The attachment included doing general clerical services in the Correspondence, Account and the Establishment sections and doing practical work with the technical sections which included the Extension, Research, Education, Rubber, Veterinary and Inland Fisheries.

Upon completion of my familiarisation, I was posted to Tarat Agriculture Station to take charge of the Station as Agriculture Officer-In-Charge. At the time of my posting, the then Director of Agriculture, Mr. James Cook who was the Director of Agriculture from 1956-1964, told me that I would occupy the Class II quarters in Tarat built especially for the Officer-In-Charge. He also told me I would be in charge of paying the wages of the labourers working in our demo farms. These instructions seemed to be a simple matter but this is when

I realised the importance of upholding the dignity of your position as a civil servant especially in matters involving financial control such as in my task of paying the workers' wages.

Tarat was the main agricultural station of the department in the old days. The station was also the main producer of improved planting material particularly pepper and field crops. The station was also the main producer of improved planting material particularly rambutan, durian and citrus to supply to farmers involved in our department's agriculture development projects. We also bred Brahman and Sindhi cattles in the agriculture station and the male calves were sold to local cattlemen at subsidised prices to upgrade their livestock. We also produced fish fry for stocking farmers' ponds.

We also run the Tarat School of Agriculture which undertook the training of the departmental staff at the Agriculture Assistant, Junior Agriculture Assistant and Home Demonstrator levels. The station had its own electricity generator for the supply of electricity to the whole station at regulated hours, while the gravity-fed water supply system provided a free water supply to all the occupants of the government quarters.

I had Chen Ko Ting, the Assistant Agriculture Officer and a handful of junior staff to help me run the station. In the office, the clerk-in-charge was the late Wee Wak Seng from whom I have learnt a lot about the General Orders and the Financial Regulations and many of the procedures in the running of the office such as financial control, the proper keeping of vote books, running record of vehicles and machinery, etc. I remember my professor at the university told me once that 'we cannot teach you everything, but we can teach you the basics so that you can teach yourself'. In Tarat I had the vast opportunity to teach myself both in the technical and administrative matters and I treasure that one year posting to Tarat.

Shortly after Sarawak achieved its independence within Malaysia in 1963, I was posted as the Divisional Agriculture Officer in Limbang, taking over from the colonial officer, B.C. Balbernie. I accepted the posting without any hesitation. I arrived in Limbang via Brunei in July 1963.

It was a challenging time because at that time, Sarawak was dealing with the threats and danger of the 'Konfrontasi'. Towards the end of 1962, on 7th December, the Brunei Rebellion took place which shook the administration in Limbang and the whole of Sarawak. The 'Great Flood' in the Limbang Valley and the Trusan Valley soon followed from 15th to 22nd January 1963 after the 'Brunei Rebellion.

There was much work to be done. Rehabilitation for the farmers whose crops and livestock were destroyed in the Great Flood was inevitable. There was the 'heart and mind campaign' to win back the people's trust in the government after the 'Brunei Rebellion. These tasks required extensive travelling. I must say the staff in the department were hard working and we covered the division extensively even with the most difficult travelling conditions mainly done by boats and on foot and, the dangers we had to face due to the security threats from the Confrontation and communism.

Nanga Medamit could only be reached by a one day speedboat journey from Limbang compared to a one to two hours drive by road now. Travelling from Lawas to Long Semado was done with the help of the Borneo Evangelical Mission four-seater plane. We would then take a full day's walk to Ba' Kelalan from Long Semado. In Limbang, the dusty road ran from the town centre to Pandaruan on one end and Kubong on the other.

At that time of my service in the Department of Agriculture, we were in charge of three areas - Agriculture, Veterinary Services, and Freshwater Fisheries. The sections in our department included the Research Branch, Extension and Training Branch, Veterinary and Animal Husbandry Branch, Agriculture Education, Development Schemes and Rubber.

At the field level there was an Agriculture Officer in each of the four divisions and because of a shortage of Agriculture Officers, the Fifth and Fourth Divisions was looked after by one Agriculture Officer.

Sarawak's main export crops at that time in order of importance were rubber, pepper, sago and coconut. A considerable proportion of the general revenue

of Sarawak was derived from the export duty levied on rubber and pepper products.

Some of the agricultural issues we had to find ways to address were poor quality through faulty processing of the rubber produced, rice production insufficiency as the total production of both wet and hill padi was insufficient and could meet only about half of the State's requirement and the limited livestock number in the Fifth Division. The only classes of livestock kept in significant numbers were pigs and poultry. Accurate agricultural statistics were not as yet available for the State.

The Department of Agriculture adopted the agricultural policy to address these issues. The policy called for maintaining soil fertility, and to develop, intensify and diversify agriculture paying particular regard to food supplies, especially rice and all forms of animal and vegetable protein; to increase exports of cash crops particularly rubber, pepper, coconut and sago and to improve the quality of the resultant produce; and, to introduce and develop new crops shown by experimentation to be of economic significance. The Sarawak government also wanted to promote and assist in the sound agricultural development of new lands and to safeguard crop and livestock industries from disease by imposing controls regulating the entry of stock and plants into Sarawak.

We also recognised the importance of providing extension service to the farmers to enable them to learn new methods that will improve their crop harvest and safeguard their livestock. This necessitated more emphasis to be placed on agricultural research from 1962 onwards as part of the government's long-term rural improvement programme.

It was also during this time that the government's policy of improving communications through the network of airfields linking remote areas and also the provision of agricultural credit through financial institutions had a direct bearing on agricultural development. With better transportation, the farmers were able to market their produce and thus realised more income from their farms. We had to adapt to this changing environment and in

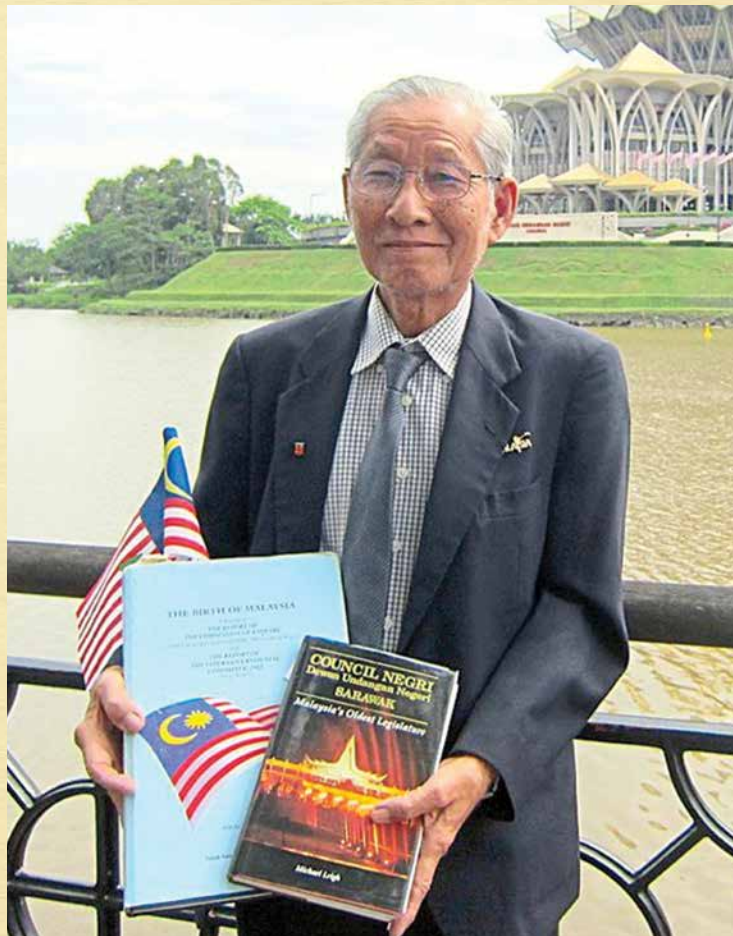
addition to rubber, pepper and coconut, crops such as cocoa, oil palm, sago and various annual fruit crops were introduced into the agricultural programme to enhance the income of the farmers. We also initiated the Farmers Organisation in 1972 and the National Extension Project in 1978. These initiatives were seen as a means to a better-planned community approach aimed at increasing the income of the farm families and thus, facilitate the poverty eradication agenda of the government. Women's roles and contributions were not neglected. The women were given assistance with a focus on agricultural extension, nutrition and child care. Cottage industry development projects were implemented to boost the women's income by utilising their skills in food preparation and in handicraft production.

During my stint as the Agriculture Officer when Sarawak was still struggling to gain its footing as a young independent nation, I appreciated the hard work and dedication of the staff of all ranks of the DOA. Whatever achievements made by the Department is only made possible by all the staff whom I had the good fortune to serve with. The kind of dedication that they had to improve the lives of our farming communities must be emulated by all civil servants.⁶

Dato Sri Joseph Kong Ted Chong

served in the following capacities as a civil servant:

- Agriculture Officer, (1962 – 1963) and Divisional Agriculture Officer, Department of Agriculture Sarawak;
- Controller of Rubber;
- Director of Department of Agriculture Sarawak (1974 – 1990);
- Board Member of Sarawak Land Development Board (SLDB), Sarawak Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority (SALCRA), Pepper Marketing Board, Malaysian Cocoa Board and Majuternak.



DATO LIM KIAN HOCK

I joined the Sarawak Administrative Service in 1962 which was at a crucial moment of nation building for Sarawak and at the threshold of the formation of Malaysia. I had to go through two detailed interviews with the Public Service Commission headed by Mr. Weekes and then had to pass the then induction course, before I was finally enlisted in the service. I felt proud when I joined the Administrative Service.

At that time, the Residents and District Officers (DOs) were given wide-ranging power and delegated powers to operate within their areas of responsibility. The Sarawak Administrative Officers (SAOs) were assigned responsibilities to assist the DOs in carrying out their duties such as Assistant Controller of Immigration, Port Officer, Deputy Registrar of Births and Deaths, Magistrates, etc. In return, they earned the respect of the people who fondly referred to them as “Abang” (a Malay title to refer to early Native Officers) or “Konsil” (Administration Officer). However, we experienced inadequacies in all sectors - communication, education, manpower training and other public amenities.

I was first posted in Sibu in April 1962. Three months later, I was transferred to Kanowit. It was here that I learned and improved my fluency in the Iban language, gained knowledge on land registry works and rural development matters.

On 8th September 1962, following the Azahari revolt in Brunei, we were put on security alert. I had to travel to Machang town towards Julau to round up all the guns and ammunition among the shops there to stop possible armed struggle. As the situation heated up, I was informed that I was to be deployed to be the Officer-in-charge (OIC) of Belaga, a border area then. I was barely a year in the Service then and I already had to shoulder such an important mission. Naturally, I was feeling somewhat terrified.

This was a time when the hot issue of “democracy” and the formation of Malaysia were echoed in most coffee shop’s gossips. So hot were the issues that some referred to them as “Rimau atas Korosi” (tiger on the chair).

On 13th February 1963, Indonesian Foreign Minister Dr Subandrio informed the British that Indonesia was opposed to the formation of Malaysia. Following this

development, I had no choice but to proceed to Belaga that year to take over the duties from Senior SAO Mr. Don Bosso Biscob, or face dismissal.

Life in Belaga was a drastic change for me. The serenity of the wilderness was destroyed by the constant sounds of Indonesian mortar shelling across the border. There was no police force or personnel in Belaga to provide security and we had to rely on a band of “home guards”. Belaga was classified as a “hard living area” where serving government officers were given a hardship allowance of RM12 per month. At that time, RM12 could buy a person about 12 katis (7.26 kg) of potatoes.

On my third day in Belaga, I heard over my little radio that Tebedu was being attacked by the Indonesian TKNU. Immediately I had an urgent radio call from the Resident, Mr. Griffin, in Sibu to boost my morale and to make sure that I did not run away in fear.

I stayed on despite my trepidations during these uncertain times. I was able to conduct Sarawak's first indirect general election through the 3-tiers system covering two Kapit District Council's wards in Belaga. On 15th September 1963, the eve of Malaysia Day, I was ceremonially escorted by a British Army Major to inspect the Quarter Guard of Honour mounted by Gurkhas Regiments as the Union Jack flag was lowered for the last time to the beating of drums and music of the “last post”.

The next exciting day, 16th September 1963, I was given the honour and privilege to lead the Belaga government officers and the local people of Belaga to salute the raising of the first Malaysia flag and recite in public the official proclamation of the formation of Malaysia.

Almost immediately after that, Indonesia launched a full confrontation against Malaysia. But life had to go on and we had to carry on our duties as administrators amidst repeated sounds of Indonesian mortar bombs shelling with greater frequency and intensity at the border. More military build-up and movements by the Gurkhas regiment and British SAS forces were conducted. It was not until November 1963 that the Indonesian TKNU finally assaulted and attacked Long Jawe, the border outpost killing one Field Force member and

nine Border Scouts stationed there. It was for me like the explosion of a real-life drama.

Following the Confrontation from across the border, the communist insurgency within Sarawak began to intensify and grew on a greater scale at the forefront. All Administrative Officers were drawn in to take part in security operations duties under the provision of the Reservation of Public Security Regulations (PPSR). I was barely out of my harrowing experience in Belaga when I was assigned to operate in curfew areas like Sarikei, Binatang (now Bintangor), Bau and Kuching. I was appointed to head the Civil Action Group (CAG) for a military operation codenamed “Jala Raja” in Nonok areas (now Samarahan) from 1969 to 1971.

During this period, I was stationed in Bau and the militant communist activities were at their peak. There were many ambushes including the burning of Buso and Tondong government outpost offices. I was fortunate to have missed two communist ambushes at Buso junction and Siniawan/Tanjung Durian area.

In 1971, I was appointed as the Civil Liaison Officer of the State Security Council and was attached to the 3rd Malaysian Infantry Brigade. I also attended psychological warfare exercises in Kelantan as part of our duties and then undertook “psywar” to win the people’s hearts and minds and support the government’s peace efforts. Following the Sri Aman peace accord which marked the end of the threat of communism in Sarawak, I was relieved to have a break from security operation duties.

I was assigned to the then newly formed Bintulu Development Authority for Regional Development where I served as its legal advisor from 1978 - 1980. Following this stint, I went on to Council Negri (Dewan Undangan Negeri) where I served for 15 rewarding years. I was promoted to Assistant Secretary in 1993 before retiring from the civil service in 1995. I served an additional 4 years under the extended contract of service.

In all the 36 years of my civil service career, I stayed with the service seldom thinking of my rights but I was always willing to take on extra responsibilities.

As a “Konsil” respected and relied on by the people, I accepted it as part of my mission to help the people in whatever way I can, even sometimes going the extra mile.

The Sarawak civil service has gone through many changes. One thing we cannot avoid is change and change we must. The present public service has more options and opportunities compared to my time.

There are more working tools like computers, more opportunities for learning and career advancement and better salary schemes, incentives, allowances and other benefits. These are plus points, but it can also make the members of the present civil service more materialistic. But it is imperative for civil servants today and in the future not to forget their overarching mission to serve the people to reduce their hardships and uplift their lives.

It is immensely rewarding and meaningful to be a civil servant. Over the years, I was happy to be able to serve the government and the people of Sarawak to the best of my ability. I remember one sweet moment when I met up again with an old Iban friend, Ali, at a Kapit coffee shop. Ali was the boy whose one year’s primary school fees I sponsored while serving as an SAO in Kapit in 1994.

I also recalled another memorable event when I was greeted by the smiling and happy faces of the people of Bakun during a meeting with them in 1996. It was a time when the controversial issue of the Bakun project instigated a lot of hostility and tension among the people towards the government. Fortunately, my pleasant experience with the people of Bakun back in 1963 helped create a friendly environment, and I was able to consult with them without any untoward incident.

When I was serving at the Dewan Undangan Negeri (DUN), my team was able to initiate the computerisation of the system in 1983, set up the parliamentary library in 1985 and achieve ISO 9001 certification in 1998. I feel proud that the Dewan Undangan Negeri Sarawak, the oldest legislative assembly in the country, continues to be the only Dewan Undangan Negeri to have all its council’s proceedings from 1867 to the present fully recorded in a computerised database (which are also available in CD format).

The system also enabled written reports (HANSARD) of the day's sitting to be available for the public the next morning.

For me, the satisfaction of being a civil servant came from being able to help the community have a better life, provide for their well-being and to interact with people of all levels and ethnic backgrounds. The experiences are priceless, and that is something that no one can take away from me.⁶

Dato Lim Kian Hock

served in the following capacities as a civil servant:

- Sarawak Administrative Officer in 1962 under D.O. Peter Scalan (Sibu) and D.O. DL Bruen;
- Head of Civil Action Group (CAG) with military operation (1969 – 1971);
- Civil Liaison Officer, attached to 3rd Malaysian Infantry Brigade (1971 – 1973);
- Legal Advisor of Bintulu Development Authority (BDA) (1978 – 1980;
- Secretary, Dewan Undangan Negeri Sarawak (1980 – 1993, 1997 – 1999);
- Assistant Secretary, Sarawak State Government (1993 – 1995).



TAN SRI DATUK AMAR
HAJI MOHAMAD MORSHIDI
BIN ABDUL GHANI

I was working with PETRONAS when Dewan Bandaraya Kuching Utara (DBKU) was set up in 1988. I was approached by the mayor-designate, the late YBhg. Datu Dr Yusoff Hj. Hanifah, to join DBKU. I hesitated because moving from a profession I was comfortable in to a completely new one seemed daunting.

Datu Dr Yusoff explained that he wanted someone from outside the government sector to bring a fresh perspective, different culture and training into the organisation. This piqued my interest, as it provided an opportunity for me to apply my experiences and background in a different setting. Eventually, with the persuasion of the then State Secretary, Tan Sri Datuk Amar Haji Bujang Bin Mohamad Nor, and another prominent individual, I accepted the offer. I saw it as a chance to give back to the State and contribute to its development.

I joined DBKU when it was just established, a green field that allowed me to introduce new ideas and innovations. It was a perfect fit for my training and background. DBKU provided the platform for me to contribute to making a positive impact on the lives of the people we served. I was also grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the establishment and growth of DBKU from scratch.

Our tasks at DBKU were simply about understanding the needs of the people and improving our services accordingly. At the time that I joined the SCS, there was a new focus on the civil service culture. Traditionally, civil servants were ingrained with the notion that they were the government and had the authority to dictate policies and decisions that the people must follow. This mindset overlooked the importance of satisfying the needs and expectations of customers. However, for individuals with a background in sales and marketing like me, ensuring the customer's satisfaction always comes first. This mentality was how I approached my duties as a civil servant, and this was what I tried to share with my colleagues. With such a mindset, I was able to introduce new perspectives and approaches that led to improved customer service. I was able to drive innovation and make a tangible difference. Throughout my civil service career, I always appreciated the opportunity to

drive change and effect improvements, and thus, make a difference in the lives of the people.

Quality management became critical as we strived to deliver the best possible service to our customers. We embraced innovation and business re-engineering to improve processes to meet customer demands. Whether it was simplifying parking systems or making rubbish collection more efficient, these initiatives emphasised both innovation and customer service. This focus on customer service and innovation led to notable achievements during my tenure at DBKU. We won the annual Chief Minister's Quality Award consecutively, showcasing our commitment to providing quality service.

I was also able to apply my background in economics and statistics when I worked at DBKU. I emphasised the importance of data and statistics in our decision-making process. For example, I realised that asset management was poor. The council did not know the whereabouts of their assets, such as grass cutters. They would purchase a grass cutter, but after a month, it would be reported as lost, after being sold without proper documentation. These issues were occurring unnoticed, with no one actively monitoring the situation. To tackle this problem, I introduced computerisation of asset management and assessment rates.

Furthermore, I believe in not reinventing the wheel. I studied successful management systems of other councils like Miri, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur. For example, I studied Singapore's parking system. Although Kuching had a parking system, the revenue generated was not satisfactory. Through careful examination, I discovered discrepancies in the collection process. Some staff would not issue parking coupons, yet still accept payments. Others would receive payments without issuing receipts. To improve the system, I proposed self-regulated parking with the implementation of parking coupons and applying electronic vehicle plate recognition technology. Our goal was efficiency. By improving the process and using technology, we reduced the number of staff required for parking management. One staff was able to manage 100 parking bays, a ten-fold increase from the previous ten parking bays. This resulted in substantial cost savings.

Another issue I addressed was waste management. I saw that both the workers and customers were contributing to the problem. Workers who collected rubbish would often throw it haphazardly rather than properly dispose of it. In addition, customers lacked suitable bins for waste disposal. To tackle this problem, I travelled to Germany to study their waste management system. I discovered the Schaefer bin, which provided a more efficient and cleaner waste disposal solution. Implementing these bins improved customer satisfaction and helped maintain cleanliness in our city. This had a positive impact on tourism and the quality of life of the residents of Kuching City.

Early in my career, I was inspired by a visit to Toyota headquarters in Japan. There, I understood the importance of the company's values. I clearly saw then how the core values of any organisation form the foundation of any successful company. Thus, when I became State Secretary, I prioritised the introduction and articulation of core values for the SCS. I did not do it myself. It was a collective undertaking among the heads of SCS agencies and departments, and GLCs who took part in the first High Performance Team (HPT) activity that we organised.

I initiated the annual HPT event to address complex challenges that required the collective expertise of different agencies and departments. By bringing together the decision-makers, solutions could be developed more efficiently and effectively. Our deliberations resulted in concrete and tangible solutions to specific issues and challenges. At the end of the HPT sessions, we presented these findings to the Chief Minister and his Cabinet. This improved accountability of and facilitated decision-making in the government.

When we discussed our organisational vision, mission and core values at the HPT event, this underlined the importance of a collective approach to fostering a positive organisational culture and the importance of shared values.

As State Secretary, I focused on the SCS organisational values for a few reasons. Firstly, core values provide a clear framework for decision-making and behaviour within an organisation. They guide employees on what is acceptable and what is not, ensuring consistency and alignment at all levels and locations. For example, integrity, the first value that we agreed on, sets the standard for

honesty and ethical behaviour, and encourages individuals to act ethically and honestly, both in and out of the workplace. When employees understand and embrace this value, they are more likely to act with integrity in their actions and decisions.

Secondly, values shape the organisation's identity and image. What I saw in Toyota was that the company was synonymous with quality. And so, an organisation's values define its character and differentiate it from competitors. Customers, stakeholders, and even potential employees are attracted to organisations with strong and positive values. This enhances trust, loyalty and the overall perception of the organisation.

Thirdly, values promote a customer-centric approach. When values such as a sense of urgency and ownership are emphasised, employees are more aware of the impact their actions have on customers. They prioritise customer satisfaction and will go the extra mile to meet their needs. This customer-centric mindset leads to improved customer loyalty, repeat business, and positive word-of-mouth.

Furthermore, values foster a sense of unity and belonging within the organisation. When employees share and embrace common values, they feel connected and motivated to work together towards shared goals. This promotes collaboration, cooperation, and a positive working environment. Employees who feel aligned with the organisation's values are also more likely to stay committed and engaged in their work. Emphasising and nurturing values within an organisation is essential for its long-term success and effectiveness. By doing so, organisations can cultivate a positive and cohesive culture that leads to improved performance and outcomes.

I also believed in leveraging expertise within the SCS. It allows us to make use of the knowledge and skills that already exist within our organisations and avoid unnecessary expenses. I recall an incident where the Department of Irrigation and Drainage (DID) wanted to hire a consultant to conduct a survey on water conditions in Kapit at an estimated cost of several million ringgit. However, I challenged DID to consider utilising the expertise of government servants from relevant departments, such as the Forest Department and

Public Works Department (JKR) instead. By using a team of professionals from within the government, the project was successfully completed without incurring significant costs. This example highlights the importance of smart partnerships and collaboration within the public sector. Engaging with external consultants may seem like the obvious choice, but oftentimes, the same results can be achieved by utilising internal resources.

To foster a culture of collaboration and teamwork within the government, I also introduced various initiatives such as the Quality and Innovation Circles (KIK) and Key Focus Activity (KFA) programmes. The KIK was an improvement on the Quality Control Circles (QCC) that was introduced in the SCS in the 1990s. The KIK serves as a platform for problem-solving and project management at the workplace, encouraging individuals to think about finding solutions rather than placing blame. The KFA, meanwhile, requires each department to present at least two projects each year, aimed at resolving pressing issues affecting the department as a whole. These projects are evaluated and approved by the Cabinet, ensuring their implementation and successful completion.

I am aware that these initiatives are just a small part of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the civil service. However, these create a ripple effect that leads to more significant improvements. It is important to remain passionate and committed to the continuous improvement of the civil service, as even small changes can have a significant impact over time. This helps enhance strategic thinking among the staff. Strategic thinking encompasses innovation, efficiency and transformation in one's job. It is about constantly improving and finding ways to achieve more without unnecessary expenditures and resources.

One of the challenges that I had to navigate during my tenure as State Secretary was how to fulfil my duties under three different Chief Ministers who, needless to say, have different development agendas, priorities, leadership styles and approaches to governance. I like to think that I managed to handle this challenge well.

I have always maintained that for a civil servant, it is crucial to navigate the political landscape with a brave and strategic approach, avoiding both fear and

disrespect towards politicians. It is essential to find ways to get things done, to overcome obstacles and to consider different paths to achieve the desired outcomes.

To effectively engage politicians, I introduced the Balanced Scorecard tailored for the government sector. This focuses on achieving customer service and timely project delivery, rather than profit. To gauge the satisfaction of the customers, surveys were regularly conducted, acknowledging the potential imperfections in indicators and their measurement but emphasising the importance of gathering feedback to improve services.

Quantifiable targets were set to ensure project completion within a specific timeframe and budget. To ensure accountability, every department was required to develop a comprehensive scorecard, and department heads were required to present their progress to me on a semi-annual basis. To gain the support and understanding of politicians, I invested time in collaborative discussions, inviting ministers and their deputies to contribute their ideas and give feedback to enhance the implementation of government projects. This helped further demonstrate our commitment and transparency.

Over time, this approach demonstrated that I and our team in the SCS were a results-oriented team. By embodying the values of being outcome-focused and presenting tangible accomplishments, I gained credibility and trust. This approach enabled me to effectively navigate the challenges of bureaucracy and politics while ensuring the success of our objectives.

I believe that through this approach, I was able to show to our staff that it is essential to adopt a brave and strategic approach when dealing with politicians. By engaging them through initiatives like the Balanced Scorecard, focusing on customer service and quantifiable targets, we can find ways to collaborate and communicate effectively, while also demonstrating tangible results in order to gain respect and influence in the political arena.

Another crucial area that I focused on as State Secretary was education and talent development. I benefited greatly when I was given the opportunity to attend a course at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. During the programme, we delved into case studies that examined important

aspects of management, including political and strategic decision-making. This, along with daily discussions and presentations, provided invaluable insights into governance and equipped me to effectively manage the delicate balance between politics and governance.

This is the kind of experience and exposure that I aspired for most of our civil servants to have. That was the rationale behind the initiative to set up our own Leadership Institute, a facility focused on building leaders. It is not just about training individuals; it is about equipping them with the skills and qualities necessary to become effective and influential leaders. I aspired for our SCS staff to be afforded the opportunity to acquire competencies such as strategic thinking, innovation and efficiency, which are vital components of personal and professional growth. However, I firmly believe that the individuals themselves must be willing to make the most of the exposure to different experiences and the opportunity to learn from others. This is what truly enriches one's knowledge and perspectives.

I have always been interested in technology and its applications. After graduating from university, my enthusiasm for technology led me to purchase my own personal computer. It was a colossal investment of RM10,000 at that time, with a meagre storage capacity of 64 kilobytes. To explore its capabilities, I sought the help of a knowledgeable friend, and together we learned to create spreadsheets without the need for punch cards. This experience marked a significant shift in the way I analysed data and conducted cash flow analysis for projects during my time at PETRONAS.

When I moved to DBKU, I saw an opportunity to revolutionise the way we calibrated the assessment rate with the use of technology. I aimed to computerise this process and make it more efficient. However, this plan did not sit well with certain individuals who saw our unconventional approach as a deviation from customary civil service practices. They felt compelled to report their concerns to Tan Sri Bujang Nor, who was State Secretary then.

Upon hearing the issues raised, Tan Sri Bujang, Tan Sri Hamid (then Deputy State Secretary) and others decided to visit DBKU to assess the situation firsthand. It was an opportunity to showcase our achievements, including state-of-the-art computer tools, and our efficient assessment centre.

The task to prepare a comprehensive presentation to demonstrate our progress fell on me. I went above and beyond to ensure that the presentation was meticulously prepared. I even utilised a cutting-edge computer system that was not commonly used in the civil service then, showcasing our commitment to innovation. During the presentation, Tan Sri Bujang and Tan Sri Hamid were genuinely impressed with the strides we had made.

This experience taught me valuable lessons about the challenges of implementing change in a bureaucratic environment. It also reinforced the importance of perseverance and dedication in overcoming resistance and achieving progress. Despite initial scepticism, the support of individuals like Tan Sri Bujang and Tan Sri Hamid enabled us to push boundaries and demonstrate the transformative power of embracing quality and adopting technology in the civil service sector.

As the State Secretary, I made it a priority to reinforce and sustain our efforts in achieving a high-performance culture in the SCS through quality. We did this by intensifying the monitoring and evaluation functions within the organisation. We introduced and applied quality measurement systems, such as statistical measurement tools to help us accurately document the improvements resulting from our continuous improvement efforts. And we highlighted our successes to encourage us to step up and sustain our efforts. We also dared to benchmark our efforts with the best practices in other countries. This was the only way we could move up the ladder of the global quality movement and be recognised internationally as a quality-managed civil service organisation. As a result of such efforts, we managed to win international recognitions such as the Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management (CAPAM) and The FutureGov awards.

When our YAB Premier Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri (Dr) Abang Haji Abdul Rahman Zohari Bin Tun Datuk Abang Haji Openg took over the helm of the Sarawak government in 2017, I was excited when he announced his resolve to transform Sarawak's economy into that of a Digital Economy. The first task the Premier directed was to organise an international conference, which later became known as IDECS (International Digital Economy Conference Sarawak). Within two months, a considerable number of participants and speakers were

gathered, including renowned names like Don Tapscott. I also immediately initiated the task of formulating a plan for Sarawak's digital economy for the next five years, from 2018 to 2022. This was a multi-sectoral endeavour as we gathered experts from various disciplines and sectors – the private sector, academia, and civil society – in several intensive lab sessions to formulate the strategies. To gain insights and avoid repeating the mistakes of others, we also visited several countries, including Estonia, China, Australia and Finland. We engaged with consultants and partners, such as Huawei, and organised workshops to exchange knowledge and ideas.

The Digital Economy Strategy 2018-2022 covered various sectors, including agriculture, industry, government services and smart cities, with 72 enablers and key areas identified. The final touch to the strategy was the digital inclusivity thrust to ensure that all segments of society can benefit from the digital economy.

We can now see the value and the transformation that our Digital Economy Strategy has made in our State, permeating every sector of our society. I am proud to have played a significant role in this transformation.

During my tenure as State Secretary, we articulated the SCS vision as “World-class Service”. The concept of being “world-class” is often misunderstood and misconstrued. Some thought that being world-class means inventing or creating something completely revolutionary, but I believe it goes beyond that. Being world-class is about the journey, the continuous pursuit of improvement and excellence.

To be world-class, one does not necessarily have to reinvent the wheel. It is possible to strive for greatness by benchmarking against and learning from other renowned organisations or countries. By aligning oneself with those who are already world-class, it becomes possible to reach that level of excellence. It is not a competition to be better than others, but rather striving to be on par with them.

The pursuit of world-class status is an ongoing process. Once a certain level of excellence is achieved, there is always room for improvement. It is a never-ending journey, constantly pushing the boundaries of what is possible. Being

world-class encompasses not only providing exceptional service to people, but also fostering economic growth. When people are happy and satisfied with the service provided, the economy flourishes.

To some, the idea of pursuing world-class status may seem unattainable, especially when faced with limited resources and challenges. However, it is important to change this mindset and focus on how to do better with the resources at hand. Every day is an opportunity to improve and to move closer to being world-class. It is not about overnight transformation, but rather consistent progress.

Being world-class is not about inventing something completely novel, but rather about the continuous journey towards improvement and excellence. It involves benchmarking against existing standards and constantly finding ways to solve customer problems. Ultimately, being world-class is not something static or unattainable. It is a mindset and a commitment to constantly strive for greatness, contributing to the betterment of society and the growth of the economy.

For today's civil servants and those coming after them in the future, there is one value that I believe holds great significance. This is the value of being kind and caring. It might seem simple, but it has a profound impact on individuals and society. When we show kindness and care towards others, we contribute to their happiness and well-being. It must be in the DNA of every civil servant to be kind and caring not only to those close to us but also to our peers and colleagues. It means looking out for each other, supporting one another, and holding each other accountable. For example, if we notice a peer consistently coming late to work, it is our responsibility to kindly inform them of the consequences such behaviour might have on their career, family and overall life. By doing so, we show that we genuinely care about their well-being.

Sometimes, people fail to recognise the impact of these seemingly small acts of kindness and care. Pay attention to even the smallest details and go the extra mile in performing your duties. Each person, regardless of their position, can be a leader within their realm of influence. It is essential to understand that by taking pains to do even the smallest things with such care, we can

have a significant impact on those around us. It is crucial to seize every opportunity to make a difference and leave a lasting positive impact on society.

Lastly, the notion of being relentless and committed until the last day of our service should drive us. Whether we move on to another organisation or retire from the civil service, we must always strive for peak performance in our roles until the very end. I always say that the day of our retirement is when our service to society ends, comparable to the day of our demise. Civil servants are all leaders in their own right when they are willing to take charge and make a difference.⁶

Tan Sri Datuk Amar Haji Mohamad Morshidi Bin Abdul Ghani

served in the following capacities as a civil servant:

- State Secretary, Sarawak State Government (2009 – 2019);
- Deputy State Secretary (2009 – 2019);
- Director, State Planning Unit (2005 – 2006);
- Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Social Development and Urbanisation (2001 – 2005);
- Director, Human Resource Development & Quality, Chief Minister's Department (2000 – 2001);
- Director, Human Resource Management, Chief Minister's Department (1998 – 2000);
- Director, *Dewan Bandaraya Kuching Utara* (DBKU) (1988 – 1998);
- Management Executive, PETRONAS (1980 – 1988).



DATO HAJAH NORHYATI
BINTI HAJI MOHD ISMAIL

With my father working as a broadcaster in RTM, I grew up exposed to the world of media and communication. When it was time for me to go to university, I came across the Mass Communication program at UTM. The program offered four areas of specialisation - broadcasting, journalism, advertising, and public relations (PR). I chose broadcasting, considering my early involvement in broadcasting, following my father around and even participating in children's programmes. It seemed like a challenging yet exciting career choice, especially since the market for mass communication professionals was rapidly growing.

After graduating, I landed a job at RTM in Sarawak right when the TV station started. By then, my father had already retired, and I felt good knowing that I was following in his footsteps. I wanted to make him proud. I was eager to gain experience, so I took on different roles within the organisation. Eventually, I was transferred to Kuala Lumpur (KL), which offered more opportunities for career advancement.

At first, I was a bit apprehensive about going to KL. The work culture, for one, was vastly different from what I was accustomed to in Sarawak. It felt as if I was a frog under a coconut shell, completely sheltered from the outside world. Uncertainty clouded my mind, and I doubted my abilities.

In KL, I took on the role of deputy producer for several years before reaching the management level. I was given the responsibility of overseeing the entertainment unit. I expressed my doubts and questioned whether I could handle the responsibility of being the head of a unit. I wondered why they had chosen me for such a crucial role.

However, my colleagues were confident in my capabilities. They believed that I possessed the necessary skills, especially the ability to communicate in English. This was essential as they anticipated sending people from our unit to ASEAN countries in the near future. Their faith in me gave me a glimmer of hope, and I overcame my initial trepidation.

I have travelled around ASEAN countries and interacted with various artists and professionals in the broadcasting industry. The experience and exposure I

gained were invaluable. I learned how the media industry operated in different environments and was able to build a network with professionals from diverse backgrounds in different countries. This experience further fueled my passion for the field of mass communication.

Working in the entertainment industry has been an enlightening experience for me. I have always emphasised to producers that it was one of the most challenging fields due to the immense creativity required. Despite the demanding nature of the job, I firmly believed that individuals who endured these challenges emerged stronger and more resilient. It is the complexity of both the job and the people involved that makes the entertainment industry a true test of character.

In 1998, I was presented with an opportunity to return to Sarawak as a position had become available. Prior to that, I was sent to Japan for a two-month course. Upon my return, I became the Deputy Director, and I was proud of the distinction of being the first local to assume this post at that time. In 2000, I faced another key decision when I was transferred to KL to be the Director of Radio. After some time, I transitioned back to television, which was more aligned with my specialisation in TV production.

When I was approached to go back to TV, it stirred up emotions within me. The TV Unit at that time was involved in some controversy and the situation frightened me. When the office approached me to take up the position, I was brought to tears, aware of the challenges that lay ahead and the complex dynamics involving the creative individuals within the organisation. The role of the head of the TV Unit comes with immense pressure, as it encompasses numerous programs and financial responsibilities. I took up the position with a firm resolve that my integrity would be vital in shielding me from controversies.

After assuming the position, I initiated a series of significant changes to address and resolve various issues plaguing the organisation. Serving as the Director of the TV Unit demanded unwavering integrity and the ability to address and resolve various pressing issues. Perhaps my ability to handle

numerous challenges efficiently during my time as the head of TV and my innovative ideas in terms of procurement and awarding contracts that emphasised integrity contributed to the decision to promote me further as the Director-General of RTM.

Being appointed as the first woman Director-General and the first Sarawakian to be given that significant position in any Federal government agency was both a thrilling and humbling distinction.

As the person in control and responsible for managing everything in the organisation, my role demanded an in-depth understanding of all aspects of the industry. It was essential to be willing to learn, even if it meant taking the hard route. Management roles often exceed the knowledge imparted by textbooks and require hands-on experience in handling human relationships. Possessing a PhD may grant knowledge, but without the ability to effectively interact with others, one's qualifications may prove inadequate. Hence, it is crucial to continuously learn and adapt in order to navigate the complexities of leadership successfully.

As a government servant, I have always maintained that integrity holds immense importance, irrespective of whether one serves at the state or federal level. Leadership in any organisation requires not only professional competence, hard work and smart strategies but also most importantly, integrity and humility.

During my tenure at RTM, I had the opportunity to witness and manage the transformation of radio equipment and facilities. This period coincided with a shift towards increased broadcasting hours, allowing a larger segment of the population to access dedicated radio and TV programmes, enabling the dissemination of information to rural communities.

I advocated for the establishment of dedicated slots for TV programmes in Sarawak and Sabah. We launched the “TV Okey” channel with a focus on producing content from East Malaysia. This included the introduction of an Iban news segment, emphasising our commitment to providing

representation to the East Malaysian region on a national platform. With the launch of the “TV Okey” channel, we were able to significantly increase the number of local programs aired from Sabah and Sarawak. We also introduced new radio channels dedicated to specific areas such as the Bintulu Division channel, to enhance the dissemination of information to rural communities.

Another programme that originated from Sarawak was the P. Ramlee singing competition. It was originally limited to radio. Recognising its potential, I fought for its inclusion on our TV stations as well, despite the associated cost. The competition has evolved into a significant cultural event in Sarawak, receiving support from the state government, including budget allocations. Through this initiative, we have fostered the growth of the music industry in Sarawak, thanks to the support of the late Tun Pehin Sri Haji Abdul Taib Bin Mahmud and his willingness to invest in the competition.

Also, during my tenure, we achieved a significant milestone as the first station to launch online radio, accessible on mobile phones throughout Malaysia. This was in 2010 when online applications were not yet available in Malaysia.

I have also been fortunate to be involved in the transition from analogue technology to digital technology in broadcasting. In 1994, I was involved in a committee responsible for the digitalisation of television at RTM. As part of this process, I had the privilege of accompanying the then Minister to China, where we gained exposure and knowledge on digital television systems. This groundbreaking development was only fully established in 2019, marking a significant milestone in the transformation of broadcasting in Malaysia.

My career has been marked by a commitment to embrace opportunities for growth and progress. Through my experiences in the establishment of dedicated programming slots to meet the information and entertainment needs of all Malaysians, and the digitalisation of television and radio, I have witnessed firsthand the significance of embracing change, seizing opportunities, and building connections. As leaders, we must always encourage our staff to embrace new challenges and pursue promotions, as

such experiences can prove invaluable in personal and professional growth.

During my tenure as Director-General, I worked hard for representation and also worked towards technological advancements. This allowed us to offer live news broadcasts and extended hours, providing a platform to address the needs and interests of the nation. Previously, the limitations of tape-based transmission via flights restricted the amount of programming we could deliver from Sabah and Sarawak. However, with digitalisation and fibre optic technology, our capabilities have expanded considerably.

After my retirement from RTM, I was engaged by the Sarawak civil service as an Adviser and was posted at UPPAN (*Unit Protokol dan Pengurusan Acara Negeri*). During my stint at UPPAN, I had the opportunity to establish UKAS (*Unit Komunikasi Awam Sarawak*), a dedicated communication unit to enhance strategic information dissemination and public relations for the Sarawak government.

To make Sarawak more visible on television, we collaborated with ASTRO. This partnership allowed us to showcase the state through various TV programmes. Similarly, for radio, we worked with Cats.FM as a partner. We secured a budget to upgrade the radio station and strategised the type of programs that would best promote Sarawak.

Recognising the importance of having a presence on the ground, we set up a system where officers would be sent to different areas to gather information and relay these back to UKAS, allowing us to have a comprehensive understanding of concerns on the ground. Our goal was to effectively address concerns and provide immediate responses. This required effective communication and collaboration between different departments to hasten the response to peoples' concerns. Our main focus was on issues management and our system relied on officers on the ground who were able to quickly relay information to us.

By having officers attached to various offices all over the state, we were able to gather information and address concerns promptly. This proactive approach

was essential in efficiently managing issues that arose and keeping the Premier and his team of political leaders informed.

When I left UKAS, I was tasked with setting up Sarawak's own television station under the newly formed Sarawak Media Group (SMG) of which I was appointed the Chairman. Together with a small team headed by SMG's CEO, Datuk Suhaimi Sulaiman, we embarked on the task of setting up the television station. While I provided guidance on the overall set-up, Datuk Suhaimi focused on the technical aspects and building a skilled workforce. We used Singapore as our benchmark.

We solicited local talent to create content and formulated policies to support the industry. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we provided employment opportunities to many aspiring creative talents and young filmmakers. As a result, the creative industry in Sarawak, encompassing film, music, and acting, is experiencing growth.

In the future, I believe Sarawak is well-prepared to become a hub for the creative industry. While external assistance is still required, our local talents and creative industry professionals possess the necessary skills. By nurturing our local production teams, we create numerous job opportunities. Additionally, our programs are designed to be relatable to the nation, with a focus on showcasing and promoting the uniqueness of Borneo. We also enhance partnerships and sell our programs to other stations and streaming services, enabling the growth of the industry to benefit our younger generations. The establishment of our own TV station is necessary to develop the creative industry in Sarawak. With proper planning and addressing pertinent issues, Sarawak has the potential to become a thriving hub within the creative economy.

Overall, my journey as a civil servant, specifically in the field of mass communication, has been rewarding and fulfilling. My desire to continue learning and growing in this field has led me to pursue opportunities that have enriched my career. I am grateful for the experiences and knowledge I have gained and the opportunity to contribute as a broadcaster.

I am immensely proud and have this tremendous sense of fulfilment and meaning in having served as a civil servant. I had the opportunity to contribute significant changes to our society by introducing and maintaining a delivery system of quality and integrity, connecting with the local people, adapting to changing times, upholding values, and ensuring balanced talent development.

By prioritising their needs, we can effectively serve and build trust with the people we serve. As civil servants, our role is to serve society and ensure that its needs and priorities are met. While technology and knowledge are important enablers, they are not the sole factors in serving society. Building a connection with the local people is equally significant. We must have the passion to work with people in order to build trust. Without connecting ourselves with the people, we cannot gain their trust. As civil servants and broadcasters, we are the bridge between stakeholders and the people.⁶

Dato Hajah Norhyati Binti Haji Mohd Ismail

served in the following capacities as a civil servant:

- Adviser, *Unit Protokol, Istiadat dan Pengurusan Acara Sarawak* (UPPAN);
- Director, *Unit Komunikasi Awam Sarawak* (UKAS) (1 January 2019 – 31 December 2019);
- Chairman, Sarawak Media Group (SMG)
- Director-General, Department of Broadcasting, Malaysia (2011 – 2014);
- Deputy Director-General of Broadcasting;
- Managing Director of Television Programmes;
- Managing Director of Radio Programmes;
- Sarawak RTM Director;
- Director of Broadcasting TV;
- Controller of Entertainment Television;
- Television Controller RTM Sarawak.



DATU OSE MURANG

After graduating from university in 1978, I initially worked as a teacher at Tun Abang Haji Openg Secondary School for six months before becoming a tutor at Universiti Pertanian, Malaysia. Shortly after, I was offered the opportunity to open the FELCRA office in Sarawak. Around this time, too, I was offered a scholarship to pursue my PhD studies at Berkeley, CA, USA. At the same time, I also had the opportunity to join the Department of Agriculture as an officer. I was torn between deciding which one to choose among these good opportunities. I weighed my options, and I realised then that I could make a tangible impact in improving the conditions of the rural communities in Sarawak by working with the Agriculture Department.

To this day, I have no regrets about my decision not to pursue my PhD studies then. My true calling was in working with the Department of Agriculture as this has provided me with the opportunity to actively contribute to the betterment of rural communities. I played a major role in developing training programmes and curricula for the department throughout the State. I realised then that the most effective way to train the farmers is not to bring them to the training centre, but to bring the training to their village right where they are, which is on their farms. This became a very effective and popular approach as the farmers were able to continue with their day-to-day farming tasks while learning.

After two years with the Department of Agriculture, I joined the Land Custody and Development Authority (LCDA) in May 1982. LCDA was then pioneering oil palm plantation development in Sarawak, which was an idea that was not accepted favourably by some quarters. It was a challenge to convince both investors and the rural communities of the potential of this venture, especially as even the planters were wary of coming to Sarawak due to the complicated land issues and weather concerns.

My task then was to assist in convincing investors to participate in this new venture in Sarawak. However, their resistance was not only due to land issues but also technical concerns. The planters were hesitant to come to Sarawak because of the significantly higher rainfall in the region, which posed risks for harvesting and hence, revenue generation. They explained that in Peninsular

Malaysia, which had a well-established and successful oil palm plantation sector, the rainfall is about 3,000 millimetres per year. Whereas in Sarawak, we get on average 6,000 millimetres per year. This means that if the rainfall is too high, harvesting of the fruits will be affected and hence, there is possible loss of revenue.

Despite these obstacles, the rest of our team and I, invited potential investors to see the proposed areas for plantation development throughout the state. We worked with them to address both the technical and land issues and gradually, we were able to overcome these challenges and attract investors to Sarawak's oil palm development programme.

After close to a decade, we observed that the yield from oil palm plantations in Sarawak was notably higher, approximately 25-30% more, in comparison to those in the Peninsular region.

This substantial boost in productivity of Sarawak's land resources, especially in the rural areas, resulted in the establishment of a new ministry - the Ministry of Land Development - dedicated to encouraging community participation in land development programmes of the Sarawak government particularly in oil palm cultivation.

This initiative led to the emergence of small-scale oil palm estates in villages throughout Sarawak. The communities such as those in Miri and in Sungai Asap, which embraced oil palm cultivation, hailed it as a "miracle crop" as it provided them with substantial income. The most important impact of this land development programme was in making the land assets of the native landowners, which used to be generally idle lands, become economically viable. As a result, the standard of living in these villages has notably improved, evidenced by the construction of new houses or longhouses and widespread ownership of four-wheel drives and pickup trucks among the residents. They were also able to send their children for higher education as the oil palm plantations companies provided scholarships for the children of the landowners.

Undoubtedly, the journey towards this success has been met with challenges and fluctuations in the world market. However, the overall sentiment among

the communities involved in oil palm cultivation remains positive. In the end, the pioneering efforts of LCDA in the development of oil palm plantations in Sarawak were successful in creating new sources of revenue for the state and the country.

During my stint with LCDA, another important matter I was directly involved with was addressing the issue of land ownership among the Native Customary Rights (NCR) landowners. This issue arose because most of the lands had not been surveyed previously. This meant that there were potentially thousands of people living on the land without clear ownership rights. And so, our task was to ensure that the land was properly surveyed and individual ownership rights were established so that the government's land development projects could move forward. Without addressing the issue of land ownership and providing legal recognition to individuals and families, it would be impossible to successfully implement any land development project in our rural communities.

This aspect of the work required a great deal of effort and coordination, but it was essential to the success of Sarawak's land development programme. Efforts to grant legal recognition to native landowners through the issuance of title deeds meant navigating through bureaucratic hurdles and resistance to change, which often felt like trying to navigate rough rapids. However, after years of hard work and persistence, we were able to successfully implement land development projects on NCR lands which required the issuance of title deeds as a prerequisite. This achievement represented a significant milestone and a step forward in Sarawak's rural-based economic development.

Personally, this provided me with practical knowledge of land ownership and development processes, and also allowed me to develop key skills in problem-solving, communication, and negotiation. These were valuable experience and capacities that helped me fulfil my duties when I was transferred to the State Planning Unit (SPU), and then appointed as Miri's Resident and subsequently, as Deputy State Secretary.

As a civil servant, I cannot overemphasise the importance of truly connecting with the people and understanding their needs and concerns and aspirations. Even as I rose through the ranks and was privileged to be appointed to higher

positions in the SCS, I remained steadfast in my conviction that genuine, on-the-ground interactions with the people are an important aspect of our role. For me, leadership goes beyond the confines of an office and requires a deep understanding of the communities one serves as a leader.

Physically going to the rural areas and engaging with the community to truly comprehend the challenges and realities they face is a paramount duty of all civil servants. By physically immersing ourselves in their local environment, we can gain a first-hand perspective on the needs and priorities of the people, which is crucial for effective policy-making and development planning.

The role of a civil servant extends beyond the formal duties outlined in their job description. This is especially true for teachers, agricultural assistants, district officers, and other government staff who are posted in rural areas. In these settings, the people look up to the civil servants not only for their official responsibilities but also as leaders and mentors. They are expected to engage with the community, offer support, and go above and beyond their official duties to address the needs of the people they serve.

For example, a teacher in a rural kampung becomes more than just an educator. They are seen as a mentor and a friend to the villagers. Similarly, agriculture assistants may find themselves carrying out various other tasks to support the community, beyond their primary role. This level of involvement and dedication is essential for building rapport and trust in the government among the people. Government officials, such as the Resident and District Officers (DOs), are expected to make regular visits to the villages and engage with the community members. These interactions help in understanding the grassroots issues and building trust among the people.

There were some occasions when we talked to civil servants who claimed that they had been to Sarawak's rural areas. When I asked them "where", they mentioned Bau, which is a place only 30 minutes away from Kuching City. So I felt compelled to tell them that in Sarawak, rural areas would mean going to places like Ulu Belaga, Ulu Kapit and Ulu Baram.

I remember an official visit of two of our former Prime Ministers to the far-flung villages of Long Banga and Long Nanga. Tan Sri Jabu, our former Deputy Chief

Minister then, assigned me to oversee and manage the former Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak's visit to Long Banga.

Some of the officers in the Prime Minister's office expressed reservations such as *"Oh, so far lah. How to go there to organise this? How do we get the crowd? How do we entertain him? What do we do?"* and other such concerns. Not only that, but even our own people were also worried about bringing our top leader to such a far-flung place.

I grew up in a village next to Long Banga, and so Tan Sri Jabu assigned me to manage this visit. When the former Prime Minister Najib arrived there, there were about 3,000 people waiting for him. The main reason that he needed to go there was for him to get to see the rural areas of Sarawak. It is crucial for our leaders to get this exposure to the realities on the ground because if the leaders have not been there, how will they be able to plan development for the people?

We also organised a visit for former Prime Minister Muhyiddin to my longhouse and to the nearby Penan longhouse. It was a significant decision as no Federal government leader had ever visited a Penan village before. This was a ground-breaking moment, and we were eager to show PM Muhyiddin the reality of the situation on the ground. As we made the arrangements, his officers expressed concerns about the distance and the mode of transportation, but we made it clear that it was essential for the Prime Minister to go there to understand the challenges faced by the people. The former PM Muhyiddin himself emphasized the importance of being present and experiencing the conditions first-hand. This exemplified the values that civil servants should uphold – empathy, courage, and a genuine desire to serve the people.

The visit to the Penan village was a testament to the commitment to bridging the gap between the government and the marginalized communities. It served as a reminder that true leadership is about being present, listening, and taking action based on the realities on the ground.

Building trust and faith in the civil service is essential for effective governance and public service delivery. This trust is not granted automatically; it must be earned through genuine and meaningful interactions with the community.

It is crucial for civil servants to understand and connect with the people they serve, showing them respect and empathy.

Simple gestures, like spending the night in a remote village or speaking the local language, can have a profound impact on how the community perceives the civil service. By demonstrating a willingness to understand and immerse in their way of life, civil servants can bridge the gap and build rapport with the people they serve.

I recall some of those visits that I personally made when I was the Resident in Miri. I went to Long Lama. At that time, Long Lama was still quite isolated because it was not accessible by land transport. There was no road nor bridge to Long Lama then. After meeting the Chinese community there, they asked me *"Where are you going after this?"* I said, *"I'm going to spend the night here."* So, the penghulu said, *"Eh, true kah? The resident never sleep here one."*

Another visit I made was to the Penan village in Long Latei. I brought all my officers there. After holding informal discussions with the people, the Penghulu asked me, *"Tuan, mana... Where are you staying the night tonight?"* speaking in Penan. Since I can speak Penan because I grew up in a kampung next to a Penan, I replied using the Penan dialect.

The people were delighted and wondered how a high-ranking government officer like me could speak their dialect (*"Eh, how come this tuan pangkat tinggi can speak Penan?"*)

Another experience I will not forget is the one I had in Kuala Sibuti, a kampung in Miri which holds a special place in my heart. I spent a month teaching there when I just finished university. When I became the Resident of Miri, I visited the kampung and discovered that despite its proximity to Miri, the kampung was not connected to the main road. I was told that it was due to political reasons. I told the kampung leaders that we would build a seven-kilometre earth road to connect the kampung to the main highway. This act not only improved the lives of the villagers but also changed their political allegiances.

This experience made me realise the importance of not discriminating people based on their political views. It also serves as a reminder of the responsibility

of civil servants to be apolitical and serve all citizens, regardless of their affiliations.

My experiences demonstrate the impact that individual initiative and kindness can have in creating meaningful change for a community. Earning the respect of the community is key to delivering effective services. When there is mutual respect and understanding, it becomes easier to engage with the community, identify their needs, and implement programmes that are truly beneficial and relevant. This approach fosters a collaborative relationship between the civil service and the community, leading to more efficient and impactful service delivery.

Despite modernisation and technological changes in the administrative system, the importance of face-to-face people engagement remains crucial in gaining the people's respect for the government. Embracing this expectation and building strong relationships with the community is vital for the overall effectiveness of public service.

Ultimately, our effectiveness as civil servants depends on our ability to connect with and earn the trust of the people we serve. By embodying respect, empathy, and genuine engagement, we can build strong relationships with the community, laying the groundwork for effective governance and public service delivery.

As individuals, we all possess different skills and capabilities that allow us to contribute in diverse ways to various projects and programmes. My personal realisation is that these skills are instrumental in driving certain initiatives and achieving specific goals. For instance, my knowledge of financial management and institutional transformation proved to be valuable when we were assessing the corporatisation and privatisation of certain agencies or government functions. My knowledge and exposure to rural development came to the forefront when I had to dedicate a substantial amount of time to the implementation of the government's transformation programme, focusing on the rural areas of Sarawak. These initiatives covered areas such as rural infrastructure, repair of dilapidated longhouses and schools, and provision of utilities such as electricity and water supplies.

The longhouses in our communities are a vital part of our cultural heritage and provide homes for many families. However, when it comes to repairs and maintenance, individual houses have often been the focus, leaving longhouses to deteriorate without much support. This has been a concern for many of us, including myself, as it impacts the safety and well-being of the residents. In response to this issue, I introduced a new programme that will provide federal funding for the repair and maintenance of longhouses. Under the Longhouse Loan Scheme, longhouses will now be eligible for federal budget allocation for repairs, including roof repairs and landscaping like building drainage ditches, amongst other necessary maintenance efforts.

I was also privileged to be part of the team that kickstarted the implementation of two critical programmes to improve the conditions in Sarawak's rural areas - the SARES and SAWAS projects.

SARES refers to Sarawak Alternative Rural Electrification Scheme while SAWAS is short for Sarawak Alternative Water Supply. Both aim to accelerate the provision of electricity and water supply to remote settlements of Sarawak.

Another important initiative I was involved in carrying out was the setting up of UNIFOR or Unit for Other Religions under the Chief Minister's Department. This unit's mandate demonstrates the Sarawak government's commitment to foster and promote greater understanding, tolerance, acceptance, mutual respect and co-operation among people of different religious beliefs in Sarawak.

I am also proud of the decision to establish Bario as a sub-district in the Baram region of Sarawak. Bario has historically faced challenges in the delivery of essential services due to its remote and inaccessible location in the highlands of Sarawak. This made the delivery of government services a major challenge in Bario. In response to this issue, we deemed it necessary to create an additional administrative area with its own structure, separate from the existing local authority. The aim is to bring much-needed services to the area and improve the overall understanding and awareness of the unique needs of Bario. This initiative has been part of a broader effort to upgrade various sub-districts in different regions, such as Serian, Betong, Bintulu, and Belaga, into their own districts to better address the specific needs of these areas.

These measures to upgrade these areas into a sub-district or district are part of the Sarawak government's aim to improve governance and access to essential services for the people. By establishing a separate administrative structure for these areas, the delivery of services and support can be improved, ultimately benefiting their respective residents. With the establishment of these sub-districts and districts, the deployment of officers in these areas has become more visible.

For public service to be effective, civil servants must embody the values they are meant to uphold. This includes being present and punctual in their duties, as well as being proactive in addressing the needs of the community. There are ample opportunities for civil servants to contribute to the development and welfare of the people, and it is imperative for them to maintain a high standard of professionalism. By doing so, they can fulfil their roles as public servants and earn the respect and trust of the communities they serve.⁶

Datu Ose Murang

served in the following capacities as a civil servant:

- Deputy State Secretary Sarawak (2009 – 2016);
- Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Tourism and Urbanisation (2009);
- Resident of Miri (2005);
- Director, Secretariat for the Corporatisation and Privatisation Committee, SPU (1997);
- LCDA (1981);
- Agriculture Officer for Farmers' Training, Department of Agriculture Sarawak (1979).



DR PETER MULOK KEDIT

My civil service career in Sarawak began during colonial times before the formation of Malaysia. I was employed as an agriculture assistant in the soil survey division of the Agriculture Department.

At that time, the British Government wanted to survey the soil capacity of Sarawak – I assume – for development purposes as to which area has what kind of soil that is suitable for agriculture.

The division was divided into different sections: the coastal swamp area, the mid-terrain and the highland. I was attached to do surveys of the coastal swamp area. To do that, my colleagues and I would travel by government long-boats from what is now Kuching Waterfront in front of the Main Bazaar to the coast through the Sarawak River at night, since we had to wait for the tide.

To put it simply, it was quite tough, especially when we had to trek through the *asam paya* (sour fruit/*Eleiodoxa conferta*) with its thorns and the mangrove, squashing through the mud together with our local workers – tough Iban guys whom we employed – who were in front of me clearing the bushes, while I was behind the chain with the compass.

At one point, one of my colleagues and I almost got lost out at sea. You see, we were trained to use the onboard motor because our job was to go along the sea, the coastal beach area and then enter small rivers. During this incident, we were somewhere in Igan, I believe. We set camp and we used a longboat along the coast and came into the small river – without knowing that once you enter the river at certain times, the tide would just flow off.

So after the tide came in, in the evening, we used the longboat out to the sea. However, around that time, there is this swell coming in. A huge swell. My colleague was handling the longboat; I was looking after the soil. And the swell came in and pushed our longboat out to the land. We almost got swallowed up by the huge wave. But by the grace of God, we arrived in time and saved ourselves. Otherwise, we would have drowned. We would have perished.

After a year or two in the Agriculture Department, I left because I fell ill with jaundice. It was because we had to drink peat water and all that during our surveys. So I told my parents, *"That's it lah. My body can't take it anymore."*

I submitted my resignation letter to the service and became a teacher and part-time reporter with the Sarawak Tribune. While working at the Tribune, I covered the Confrontation. At one point following foreign correspondents who came to cover the beginning of the Brunei rebellion – much to the chagrin of my editor at the time. A senior reporter and I also wrote stories on the activities of the communists in Serian.

My work in the newspaper caught the attention of the director of the Sarawak Information Service, Dato ARG Morrison, (whose wife was the famed photographer Hedda Morrison). He called me from his office while I was collecting the news of the day from the pigeonhole at the Information Service – which during Confrontation days was the centre of all information – and asked, *"Look, young man. Why don't you come and join us?"* That was how I returned to the civil service.

Essentially, I was writing propaganda for the British Government at the height of the Confrontation. I remember flying with the military operations team to places like Tebedu to cover their activities and write stories.

After this stint, I had the opportunity, along with a few other officers from here in Sarawak and in Sabah, to take journalism courses in Kuala Lumpur for a few months. Then, I was sent to Australia by the British government under the Colombo Plan to further my studies in journalism and I also managed to get my degree in anthropology and sociology.

When I returned from my studies, I was met with disappointment as there were no available positions for me at the Information Department. However, my degree in anthropology and sociology led to an unexpected transfer to the Museum Department. As the first graduate in these fields within the

department, I was assigned the responsibilities of researching and writing, with a focus on socio-cultural research.

During that time, the Museum played a crucial role as an agency that assisted the State government in development plans and projects. This included involvement in significant undertakings such as the Batang Ai Hydroelectric Project in the 1980s and later the Bakun Hydroelectric Project. In these projects, I had the task of conducting interviews with the affected individuals, helping them understand the scope and implications of the projects, and persuading them to accept the resettlement scheme.

This period, I believe, can be seen as the early days of multi-disciplinary community development. All the civil servants involved in these projects consisted of professionals in various domains such as resettlement development, environmental experts, agriculturists, other technical experts and research staff. We were pioneers in this regard, functioning as jack-of-all-trades rather than specialists. The government took full advantage of our diverse skill sets, and I found myself in a unique position as an early graduate in social science. During those days, the Museum played a vital role in socio-economic development planning and project execution.

During my time at the Sarawak Museum, we initiated the idea of organising the Cultural Symposium. The purpose was to have all cultural associations in Sarawak come together and get their views on various aspects of culture as well as development. The first symposium was held in Kuching. Then, we organised seminars and workshops for the different communities across the State.

So I went all the way to Serian to set up the Bidayuh seminar-workshop; to Mukah, for the Melanau workshop; to Miri, for the Orang Ulu workshop; to Sibuan, for the Chinese workshop; Iban Workshop in Kapit; and to Kuching, for the workshops for Malays and Indians, respectively. After this workshop series, we gathered the participants again for the second round of the symposium in Kuching, where each of the ethnic communities presented

their respective resolutions. The entire format of the symposium was adopted in the succeeding cultural symposiums, which is now held every five years. The cultural symposium has become an important meeting ground for our multiracial population to meet and discuss issues that concern them collectively, and also provide recommendations to the government.

Multiculturalism has always been deeply ingrained in the fabric of Sarawak society. The civil service in Sarawak has played a significant role in promoting and preserving this multicultural identity, particularly in the past. Unlike today, where non-governmental organisations (NGOs) often champion these causes, it was government agencies like the Resident and District Offices (R&DOs), the different government ministries and agencies such as the Sarawak Museum that spearheaded these efforts.

During that time, civil service was not simply a bureaucratic machine, but a group of individuals committed to serving the people and the development of Sarawak. They worked together as a unified, solidified force driven by a sense of purpose and service. There was no bureaucracy or rigid enforcement of rules and regulations. Instead, they approached their work with a sense of *gotong royong* - a Malay term for cooperation - where everyone contributed and worked together for a common goal.

This unity, born out of the shared sense of service and the need to fight against external threats, created a strong bond among the civil servants. It allowed them to transcend their individual roles and specialities, focusing instead on the larger mission of building Sarawak and preserving its rich cultural heritage.

In different eras, different challenges arise, and the civil service has to confront them head-on. The pioneering days of the civil service in Sarawak may be looked upon favourably in hindsight, but at the time, there was no room for second thoughts. They simply did what needed to be done. I believe it was the spirit of unity and service that enabled them to manage and overcome the challenges.

Today, as Sarawak continues to evolve and face new challenges, I hope that the spirit of unity and multiculturalism that defined the Sarawak Civil Service (SCS) in the past remains an essential part of its identity. Despite the changing times, the SCS still has a crucial role to play in promoting multiculturalism and preserving the diverse heritage of Sarawak. By embracing the legacy of the early pioneers and applying their spirit of unity and service, the SCS can continue to be a driving force for Sarawak's cultural growth and development, which is founded on unity and harmony among its multicultural population.⁶

Note: The above is based on an interview in 2022.

Dr Peter Mulok Kedit

served in the following capacities as a civil servant:

- Agricultural Assistant, (Soil Survey Division) Department of Agriculture (1960 – 1961);
- Assistant Press Officer, Sarawak Information Service (1963 – 1965);
- Government Ethnologist and Director, Sarawak Museum (1973 – 1996).



TAN SRI DATO' SRI
HAJI SAFRI AWANG BIN ZAIDELL

I started my career in the civil service as a secondary school teacher at Maderasah Melayu in January 1954. It was memorable as I found myself teaching students, some of whom were actually older than myself! Though I had no experience, I found that I could get along well in my job and learn fast. It gave me a sense of satisfaction realising that we could produce very good results at the end of the year, with our students scoring the best in the whole of Sarawak.

I went to New Zealand for further studies in 1960 and when I returned at the end of 1962, I was posted to the Batu Lintang Teacher's Training College as a lecturer. Then I was transferred to the Secretariat and was given the post of Assistant Secretary in charge of Protocol.

I experienced all the Sarawak civil service administrations, from the time of the Brookes to the British and after the formation of Malaysia.

During the rule of the Rajahs, there were Native Officers serving as rural administrators. Under British rule, there were more Malays involved in civil service rather than native officers from the rural areas. This was not intentional, I believe. This had to do with Malays living mainly in urban areas then and having more educational opportunities. After the colonial administration, the Sarawak civil service was made open to everyone, and educational opportunities were also made available to other races. After independence, everyone had equal opportunities to move up the career ladder and become head of departments.

As a Protocol Officer, one very challenging assignment that I had to do was to organise the first-ever visit of the King of Malaysia to Sarawak. This was in 1964, just a year after Merdeka, and there were still a lot of British officers serving in the Secretariat. I was the only Protocol Officer then unlike now, when we have a full department to handle protocol functions.

I gathered a group of people from various departments, and together, we formed a team. Through teamwork, we managed to organise the first-ever visit of the Agong. Of course, we made mistakes, but it was a good start and it was well-managed. It was the time when communist insurgents were still very much a security threat. It was nerve-racking to say the least to take care of the King and other VIPs at that time. Without much experience, we relied so much on common sense and on that Sarawak spirit of "doing your best to make people happy".

It was exciting and interesting. We made mistakes somehow but the willingness to put up a good show was there. I realised that the people of

Sarawak would always give their best to put up a good show and they go beyond what is expected to impress the visitors.

From Assistant Secretary in the Secretariat, I was posted as a District Officer (DO) in Miri. It was a privilege to be given that position. Again, I did not have much experience in the administration aspect so I had to apply common sense in carrying out my duties.

I flew to Miri from Kuching using a very small aeroplane. I landed at the Lutong Airport; it was just a grass airport and the sight of long and thick grasses around, greeted me. When I arrived at the District Office, I saw the same sight of long, thick grass around the small building. I told myself I had to do something to make the district office a more pleasant and welcoming place. By the time I left the Miri District Office, the grass was much shorter!

I experienced some very unpleasant and frightening situations when I was the DO.

One day, I was visiting Sibuti by boat, and I got seasick. Along the way near Sibuti upriver, we encountered a longhouse on fire. I saw the women wailing and the men looked dejected. On the spot, despite the discomfort of seasickness, I had to organise a relief committee. I had to get people to raise funds quickly and other things that were needed to help the victims of the fire at the soonest possible time.

As a DO, I also had to perform the duties of a Magistrate. So one day, I was forced to witness an actual post-mortem session in full view. I had to see for myself how the man took out the body organs of the dead man and afterwards, just put back those parts again right before my eyes! I also had to witness the cutting of the man's head as they were trying to find out the actual cause of the death. When I returned to my bungalow that night, it seemed the dead man's face was everywhere! It took me some time to get over that frightening experience.

I was also assigned to serve in Baram in 1966. I have at least three memorable times in Baram. Firstly, it was during the organising of the Baram Regatta. I believe that the Baram Regatta was and still is the mother of all regattas! It was fantastic and in those days, the regatta was just like a Pesta. It was a big celebration wherein all the Orang Ulu would come down in their longboats not only just to participate but also to meet and have a good time with one another. People come from as far as Miri and Brunei. The guest of honour then was Tun Abdul Razak, then Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia.

There was so much to do then and most of the time, I had to think on my feet. Again, it was my first experience organising such a big event. One challenging task was looking for accommodation for the guests as there were no hotels then. I even had to take part in preparing the “tuak” and at the same time, meet and be with the VIPS. All that time, Marudi became very colourful. During the evening sessions, jars of tuak were just placed around for people to drink. There was even a time when someone found a dead mouse in one of the jars!

I remember having to go to Bario in 1966. It was memorable because Bario then was not accessible at all. Weather conditions would somehow determine whether you could go to Bario or not.

I had to stay in Bario for a month to supervise the changing of guards. It was during Confrontation time (Malaysian conflict with Indonesia). There was a confrontation in the jungles, and the Bario area was greatly attacked. In 1966, it was over. After the confrontation, the British soldiers were no longer required in Malaysia. The British were going home so there was this duty handed over to our Malaysian officers. When the British left, they did not bring their belongings such as refrigerator, kitchen utensils, mattress – they wanted to give all these to the Bario people. So I had to arrange for these things to be distributed. If this matter was not handled properly, a lot of things could go wrong that could trigger conflicts among the people.

At the height of the *Konfrontasi*, it was dangerous to go from place to place. But as a civil servant, I had no choice but to face the dangers when the people needed my assistance. I recalled that time when Dato Oyong Lawai Jau, who was then the paramount chief of the Orang Ulu in Baram, suddenly rang me up one day and said, “*Come to my house in Marudi.*” So I said, “*What’s on?*” And he said, “*I have my people from the borders here with me.*”

In those times, there were a lot of people coming in not only from other parts of Sarawak but also from Kalimantan and Brunei to the highlands in Miri. The village chiefs often needed my help to attend to the needs of these people.

From Miri, I was transferred to Simanggang. This was at the time when the communist uprising was very strong. In those days, some Chinese were influenced by communist ideologies.

One day, a young Chinese boy came to my office and said, “*Tuan, I want to go to China.*”

I asked him, “*Why do you want to go to China?*”

"I want to be with the Great China, with the Motherland. Can you help me to go to China?"

So I said, *"Maybe China looks rosy from a distance but China is a communist country so think it over and I give you one week to think about it. And remember, once you leave for China you cannot come back here."*

I waited for that boy to see me after a week but I hadn't seen or heard anything from him since then. Some years later, when I was assigned as a Special Assistant to the Chief Minister, and on one of my trips to Marudi, a young man approached me and said, *"Sir, it's me who went to your office some eight years ago. I was the boy who wanted to go to China. I'm thankful I never did. Thank you for your advice!"* These kinds of encounters with the people gave me a sense of satisfaction as a civil servant, knowing how I somehow made a difference in people's lives.

I had the opportunity to work in London for three years as a Student Welfare Officer attached to the Malaysian High Commission. I met students and dealt with those who were influenced to join left-wing organisations, and bailed out some naughty ones from imprisonment and related situations. One of the incidents that I will always remember was when I had to make funeral arrangements for a Malaysian girl who had committed suicide. It was heartbreaking to tell her parents about it. At the same time, it was an educational experience; I was present throughout the cremation process and that's how I learned a little about Buddhism.

Back in Sarawak, I was given the post of Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Youth and Sports where I had to lead the efforts to implement activities for Sarawakian youths. I had the opportunity to help form SABERKAS in 1973, an umbrella organisation for youth-related groups in Sarawak. The Chief Minister then, Datuk Patinggi Abdul Rahman, was the president. And I was its first deputy president. It was not easy to get youth leaders to merge their organisations into a single body. But after a series of dialogues and meetings, the majority agreed to form SABERKAS.

My next assignment was as the Deputy Director of Education and then as Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Communications and Works (now the Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Communications). In 1982, I was appointed Deputy State Secretary and served in this capacity until 1990.

My civil service life had a tremendous impact on my civil engagements. It gave me a lot of opportunities to contribute to non-governmental organisations.

Besides my involvement in SABERKAS, I was also involved in setting up Angkatan Zaman Mansang (AZAM).

During this time, Chief Minister Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri (Dr) Haji Abdul Taib Mahmud considered it necessary for an NGO be formed to complement the efforts of the various government agencies in development communication. If I may say so, the formation of AZAM in 1983 was a significant step. I served as its Chairman from 1983-1998. It was a fruitful experience to see it grow from zero to the vibrant organization that it is today, and it gives me a sense of satisfaction. Upon his retirement from the Sarawak civil service in 1990, Tan Sri Safri served for five years as Director of the *Yayasan Sarawak* (Sarawak Foundation); Chairman of AZAM and Chief Scout Commissioner for the Scouts Association of Sarawak until 1991.

I believe that my career as a civil servant had been made doubly meaningful by my involvement in civil society organisations. Both these involvements gave me the privilege to touch lives and leave an impression that anyone will not easily forget.

For a truly meaningful career in the civil service, I advise our civil servants to overcome their fear of the unknown. Serve with courage and dedication. Embrace each day with enthusiasm to serve. Appreciate the chance you are given on a daily basis to make someone's life better. Be positive all the time and do your work and use your common sense, practise diligence, be kind and caring and I am sure you will end the day feeling fulfilled and satisfied.⁶

Tan Sri Dato' Sri Haji Safri Awang Bin Zaidell

served in the following capacities as a civil servant:

- Assistant Secretary in the Chief Minister's Office;
- District Officer for districts of Miri, Baram and Simanggang;
- Education Attaché at the Malaysian High Commission in London;
- Deputy Director of State Education and Permanent Secretary in several ministries;
- Deputy State Secretary (1982 – 1990);
- Upon his retirement from the Sarawak civil service in 1990, Tan Sri Safri served for five years as Director of *Yayasan Sarawak* (Sarawak Foundation).



DATU STEPHEN JUSSEM DUNDON



On 16th January 1959, I was accepted as a probationary Sarawak Administrative Officer (SAO). I then attended a one-month in-service training course at the Sarawak Civil Service Training Centre at Batu Lintang, Kuching. After the training, I was posted to the Kuching District Office where I learned to deal with the public.

I passed my SAO Government examinations, both the lower and higher standards, and the Senior Service Government examinations before the three-year probationary period expired.

As an SAO, I travelled extensively to all the villages, longhouses and Chinese settlements in the district. During our training, it was stressed upon us that it was part of our jobs as SAOs to visit all places in the district and to establish rapport with the people under our jurisdiction.

I was also appointed a Magistrate Class III with the power to hear small cases like minor traffic offences, and minor thefts. I was also part of the investigating team for accidental shootings and murders at border villages like Gumbang, Krokong, Serikin, Pejiru, Pangkalan Tebang, Tringgus and Jagoi Stass. These incidents were not uncommon in the 60s in Bau with the presence of Indonesian barter traders, locally known as “*Simokel*”, who came to Bau from Kalimantan via these villages.

In early 1962, I was sent by the government for a one-year diploma course in public and social administration at South Devon Technical College, Torquay, U.K. This came just a few months before confirmation of my appointment as a SAO III. Two other officers sent to attend the course were the late SAO I Mr. Augustine Chong and SAO I Mr. Goh Hak Seng. It was an exciting moment for me because it was considered a great privilege to study overseas at that time. This spurred me to work harder with greater determination. I was aiming to get a degree as some of my colleagues who went to Canada did after completing their diplomas. When I came back to Sarawak with the diploma at the end of 1962, I went to see a senior officer in the State Establishment Office to ask him if the government could consider my application to pursue a

degree course. He told me bluntly that the case of the trainees sent to Canada was the first and the last of native officers to be granted a chance to do a degree course after completing their diplomas. I remember feeling terribly upset, and I can never forget that incident to this day, as there are better and more polite ways of telling me “No”. I had to abide by the Government’s directive and wait for my new appointment.

I was posted back to the Kuching District Office as an SAO assigned to deal mainly with Bidayuh affairs. I visited all the remote Bidayuh areas, like Padawan, Penrissen, Pinyowa, Braang and Siburan areas of Kuching District. I also travelled to coastal Malay villages and to Iban villages to meet their *Tua Kampung* and *Tuai Rumah*. I held frequent dialogues with them including their “*anak-biak*” to explain government policies, programmes and directives. Our travelling team was composed of representatives from relevant government departments, including the local councils, so that we could explain the details to the people. We also helped the villages organise compound cleaning and other *gotong-royong* activities, and sometimes, some sports activities.

During these travels, we also conducted the popular “tin system” census and updates. The tin system was a paper-based record-keeping system on important data on villages, including family details, such as guns ownership, agriculture, livestock, medical, health, and social issues. It was called the “tin system” for the waterproof metal containers (tins) in which the paper forms for the census were kept during our travelling to the rural areas. The “tins” could float and keep the documents safe and dry should the boat capsize. The “tin system” “database” was very useful to the government during that time.

As a SAO, we were both the voice of the people and the government. We had to know and understand the problems and issues facing the people in order to bring them up for the attention of the government. At the same time, we had to explain government policies and programmes to the people. A SAO’s duties are many and varied. As a “jack-of-all-trades”, we had to be knowledgeable about many aspects of the local conditions, cultures and practices. To excel, a

SAO needs to have lots of patience, adaptability, endurance, persuasive skills, consideration for others, the ability to compromise, and a sense of moderation.

In a district, a SAO might be given a few assignments by his D.O. or senior SAO or Senior Native Officer (SNO). In my case, I was attached to a social research team from Holland. I followed them in their programmes covering both the coastal and inland areas. I was the interpreter and translator, arranged the logistics, and organised meetings between the headmen and the research team.

When the two-year Indonesian Confrontation and the Clandestine Communist Organisation (CCO) threats happened shortly after Sarawak's independence in 1963, SAOs were given added responsibility as front-liners, along with the police and military personnel in handling the conflict. I was involved in the Padawan, Tibia, Braang, Pinyowa, Benguh, Penrissen and Siburan areas, and in the three controlled areas of Siburan, Beratok and Tapah where the CCO was very active. I was appointed as a member of the psychological warfare team with the Commonwealth forces (Green Jackets) in the villages in these areas. We travelled extensively within these areas to organise dialogues and meetings with the people and showed psywar films to the people there. This was to enlist and develop their support for and co-operation with the government. These were dangerous assignments and had to be done tactfully.

Our duties also included assisting the sick, the poor, the handicapped and the needy in the villages. Most of us who served in the rural areas at that time passionately wanted progress and development for the rural poor. In my case, I think my own experience with poverty and hardship during the Japanese Occupation made it easier for me to empathise with the poor and destitute.

I had the opportunity to recommend a few blind children from the villages to be assisted and trained at the Government Blind Centre in Kuching. Some managed to study up to the university level. Today, some are heading welfare organisations, while others were trained to earn a living in some other ways such as providing massage services, and handicrafts.

In the course of fulfilling our duties, discipline was the paramount quality. This was the way to earn the trust and the respect of the people. We were not allowed to go out freely, not even for coffee breaks during office hours. We brought our own coffee with us in a flask and had it in the office.

I think that civil servants will always have a heart for the community. Even after we retired from the service, we still carry that value in our hearts. That is why after I retired from the SCS, I continued to volunteer in a few organisations.

Being a Bidayuh, I tried to the best of my ability, to serve and contribute to the development of the Bidayuh community. It was a privilege to be appointed as a Temenggong for the Bidayuh community of the Kuching Division.

Things are so much different today. The level of education of the people is much higher, their lifestyle is fast-paced, and the working environment is more conducive and productive. My advice to the younger generation is that one must first be interested in life, eager to do something new and improve oneself as much as possible by updating one's knowledge through reading and networking. If money permits, travel overseas occasionally as a way of learning new knowledge and understanding. Be good and be kind to everyone. It does not cost anything to smile and greet others with "hello", "good morning", "good afternoon", or "*apa khabar?*". Practise humility, and do not show a sour face to people that you meet. Always be a peacemaker and advisor and show leadership by example in whatever you do. These are certainly not easy, but they are important traits that a civil servant must have.

As civil servants, we must always safeguard the reputation, the achievements and the contributions of the civil service institution by being conscious of our behaviour in public. When that time comes for retirement, you will feel proud that you made it through your days as a civil servant with an untarnished reputation and that you contributed to building trust between the people and the government.

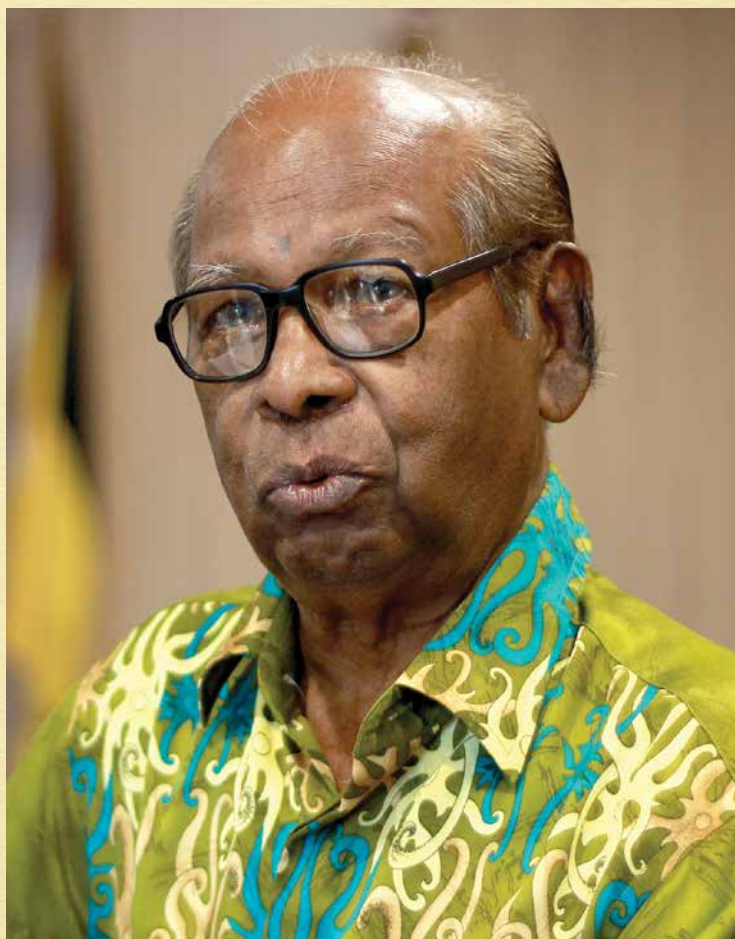
It is such a privilege to work in an institution such as the civil service where

there are boundless opportunities to contribute to the betterment of society. For me, the best contribution that I was able to give to the community was my readiness to explain, advise, motivate, and guide, without prejudice, the people on government policies, and programmes and how they could take advantage of these to improve their lives. The success of the people whom we once served is our just reward and reflects our commitment and dedication.⁶

Datu Stephen Jussem Dundon

served in the following capacities as a civil servant:

- Sarawak Administrative Service Officer (1960);
- Deputy State Supervisor of Election, Sarawak (1965 – 1967);
- DDO for Kuching Division and Private Secretary to YAB Datuk Tawi Sli for 6 months (1967 – 1969);
- Private Secretary to the third Chief Minister of Sarawak, Tun Datuk Patinggi Haji Abdul Rahman Bin Ya'kub (1970 – 1972);
- Private Secretary to the second TYT of Sarawak, Tun Datuk Patinggi Tuanku Haji Bujang (1973 – 1975);
- State Training Officer, Chief Minister's Office (1978 – 1981);
- Attached to Protocol Unit and posted to act as Resident for Kuching (1982 – 1984);
- Resident of Kapit (1985 – 1987);
- Resident of Miri (1987 – 1989);
- Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Housing (1989 – 1992);
- Appointed as Temenggong for Bidayuh Community in Kuching Division (1999 – 2012).



TANTHONEY KOMARUSAMY

My civil service career began during the colonial era. When the Japanese invaded Sarawak, life as we knew it then was disrupted. We were forced to discontinue our studies during the war. But I had this encounter with Japanese soldiers that led to an unexpected opportunity to work as a telephone operator in their military line. While doing this, I had the chance to learn basic Japanese.

Following the end of the Japanese occupation, I had the opportunity to resume my studies at St Joseph School in Kuching. I didn't think I could do it, but my elder brother and Mr Polycarp Sim encouraged me. With their encouragement and guidance and with the help of my teachers, I managed to receive double promotion from Standard Four to Six. And in 1948, I successfully completed my schooling when I passed my Standard Seven studies.

Shortly after completing my studies, I went to the government Secretariat building to apply for a job. A man gave me a form to fill up, and when I gave him the form, he looked at it, and straightaway he told me that I could start work the next day. This was on 1st January 1948. There was a lot of job vacancies at the start of the British administration during the colonial era.

After a brief introduction by a gentleman, I was assigned to work in the Treasury Department at the Secretariat. Following six months of on-the-job training, I was transferred to the Resident's office where I met Mr L.K. Morse and the District Officer, Mr J.R. Outram.

The work culture at that time was we had limited interaction with our superiors. We were expected to do our duties diligently and quietly alongside other staff members. We went through the rigid hierarchical structure and bureaucratic landscape of the colonial era within the civil service at the time. The protocols and decorum of that time did not allow us any interactions with the Resident and district officer aside from getting work orders from them.

After my stint at the Treasury Department, I was transferred to the Resident's Office in July 1948. The Resident's Office was a prestigious institution, with Residents being members of the Council Negri and addressed as "the

Honourable Resident” at that time. I recalled being introduced to the Resident, Mr. L.K. Morse, who greeted me with a smile and a handshake but no further conversation. I was then introduced to the District Officer, Mr J.R. Outram, who also exchanged pleasantries in a similar manner. Then, I was introduced to the other staff members in the office, marking the start of my work in the Resident’s Office.

After completing a year of service, I was asked to go on relief duty to Lundu, a remote area accessible only by sea. At that that time, there was no road access to Lundu. I had to travel there by sea. From Godown No. 8 at the Kuching Wharf, (which used to be at the site opposite the Grand Margherita Hotel now), I took a boat to go to Lundu. From there, it took two hours to Santubong (River) mouth. From Santubong (River) mouth to the Lundu river mouth, it took four hours and then another two hours journey. So it was a total of eight hours altogether. On a day in January, the sea was very rough. It was my first time traveling outside Kuching and it was a very difficult and dangerous journey where I was vomiting all the time.

After experiencing rough seas and seasickness during the journey, thankfully, I was greeted with a warm welcome by the Chief Clerk, Yap Loy, and the Native Officer, Abang Haji Adenan.

I was also introduced to other prominent figures in Lundu, including Kapitan Goh. At that time, especially in small, rural stations like in Lundu, they respect the government servants very much. My assignment then was to be the second clerk. When the chief clerk goes on leave, the second clerk takes over.

One of my duties at that time was overseeing the collection of an annual head tax of RM1 from Malays and natives in the district. It was in performing this task that I experienced an unforgettable and unpleasant experience with the colonial officer at that time. This incident left a lasting impact on me, as this was the first time I experienced a rather harsh treatment from a colonial officer.

Dealing with such harsh treatment from my superiors at that time was a real challenge in my work. Transitions and changes in the colonial officers

assigned as district officers further impacted my early civil service journey. With different District Officers coming and going, each leaving their own mark on the office environment, we had to continuously adapt to their different temperaments and styles. Despite these challenges, I had to do my tasks well. Thankfully, I was quite adept in using the abacus that time. The Chief Clerk, Ghee Eng Hui noticed my skill in calculations and transferred me to the account section under his guidance.

I witnessed the transition of authority from British officers to local ones. From the strict and aloof demeanour of the colonial officers to the friendly and approachable nature of local officers, there was a major shift in the working conditions and relationships within the office.

I had the privilege to be under the supervision of local officials like Datuk Abang Haji Openg, who was transferred from Limbang to take over the post of District Officer, replacing the colonial officer. Under his leadership and management of the District Office, there was a sense of camaraderie and respect for lower ranking staff that was lacking during the colonial period. The local District Officer's willingness to engage with his staff, inviting them to his home during festivals, and displaying a jovial attitude created a more conducive work environment. The approachable nature of local officers inspired greater dedication and diligence among us, the staff. So that was the major difference that I observed and experienced between the colonial officers and the local officers who took over when we gained our independence from the British. Our local officers may not have been as highly educated as the colonial officers but they possessed good character and were able to relate with the staff and the people well.

I realised then that a leader's demeanour and a caring attitude towards the people who worked under him, and to the people who came to our office for assistance, was important in fostering a positive work culture. While the colonial officers maintained a certain distance from the staff and from the people, the local officials, like Datuk Abang Haji Openg, were friendly and approachable and showed a caring attitude. This led to a more harmonious working relationship and increased productivity.

I was transferred to work in Bau and during this time, I encountered challenges that tested my resilience and adaptability. Bau then was facing the challenges of a district still under development. The road to Bau was treacherous, under construction and barely passable. The arduous eight-hour journey from Kuching to Bau, navigating the treacherous Batu Kitang Road under construction, was just the beginning. Upon arrival, I found myself without suitable quarters for my young family. We were forced to reside near the police station barrack with the warders.

However, I was grateful for the opportunity to work with the then Chief Clerk, Chia Kui Chai, a seasoned veteran in his sixties, who captivated me with his adeptness on the abacus. He meticulously managed large sums of cash in the absence of modern technology. One evening, I offered my assistance, a gesture that surprised and pleased him. I swiftly became his trusted aide, and with his guidance, I improved my skills in financial calculations and account reconciliations. I embraced the opportunity to learn from Chia and his mentorship shaped my approach to civil service. With each passing day, I grew more adept in financial matters. I learned the intricacies of fiscal management, a crucial aspect of our duties at the district office. The precision and diligence required in handling daily financial transactions underscored the importance of fiscal responsibility and accountability.

I was transferred to Simunjan, prompted by false accusations of doing outside work during office hours. I felt disheartened and abandoned by the colonial authorities. It was my encounter with Datuk Abang Haji Openg that restored my faith and confidence in the civil service administration. This experience highlighted the contrast between the dismissive and uncaring attitude of the colonial Resident and the compassionate and understanding nature of Datuk Abang Haji Openg. Despite the injustice I faced, I remained committed to my work following the advice and encouragement from Datuk Abang Haji Openg. I maintained my willingness to learn and improve my skills and this attitude helped me navigate through the discrimination and unfair treatment I faced during the colonial times.

As my civil service career progressed, I found myself under the guidance of a new District Officer, Abang Haji Abdulrahim. Known for his efficiency and kindness, Abdulrahim recognized my skill as a typist and appointed me as a correspondence clerk. When the need arose to form the Lower Sadong District Council, I stepped up to the challenge and took on the role of secretary. With my dedication and hard work, I managed to impress not only my superior but also the Resident of the First Division.

I earned a promotion to acting Assistant Secretary at the Kuching Rural District Council. It was a position that would test my skills and character in new ways, but I faced the challenge head-on. In this position, I found myself caught in the political turmoil at the Kuching Rural District Council. The council meetings were filled with heated arguments between the members of different political parties, each vying for control and power. As the assistant secretary, I had the task of recording the minutes of these contentious meetings.

The council eventually underwent changes in leadership, and I was delighted when I received a promotion and was assigned at the training branch of the Chief Minister's Office. I must have caught the attention of Governor Tun Datuk Abang Haji Openg, who expressed his appreciation for our shared history at the District Office. This experience made me realize the importance of maintaining relationships and handling challenges with grace and determination. I learned that earning respect and advancement in the civil service required honesty, hard work, and the ability to navigate the political landscape with finesse.

During my civil service career, I received various forms of training that shaped my professional development. The establishment of the Sarawak Civil Service Training Centre in 1960 marked a significant milestone in the Sarawak civil service administration. Under the leadership of Chin Chin Sen and Spencer Ong, I and my colleagues underwent rigorous training in areas such as administrative services, public relations, and financial management.

One particular training session led by expert Quinn Levins emphasized the importance of in-service training to improve efficiency and enhance public service. I learned valuable lessons on professionalism, humility, and the importance of serving the public with respect and integrity. The training not only equipped me with practical skills but also instilled in me a strong sense of duty towards the people that we serve.

My duties in the Chief Minister's Office expanded to include handling protocol matters and fostering goodwill among diverse communities. The tumultuous events of May 13, 1969, tested the unity and security of Sarawak, prompting us to be part of the Goodwill Committee aimed at bridging cultural divides and combating external threats.

Even after my retirement in 1986, I remained active in community affairs and continued to uphold the principles of excellence and service instilled in me through my civil service career.

In my civil service career, I remembered a colonial officer named Mr Harris. He took great pride in his appearance. He always made sure to dress impeccably, with pressed suits and polished shoes. He believed that his image was a reflection of his professionalism and dedication to his job. He understood the importance of maintaining a certain level of respect and credibility in the eyes of the public. He knew that a well-dressed civil servant would command more respect and attention than one who appeared sloppy or unkempt. And so, he made it a point to always look his best, whether he was meeting with colleagues or attending important events.

However, despite his efforts to dress to impress, Mr Harris also believed in humility. He never wanted his attire to overshadow his character or abilities. He strived to strike a balance between looking presentable and remaining approachable, knowing that true professionalism went beyond just appearances.

Observing Mr Harris then, I learned that a civil servant's identity and personality were not solely defined by their outward appearance. It was their actions, integrity, and dedication to serving the public that truly set them

apart. And so, I continued to embody these qualities in everything that I did as a civil servant.

My advice to current and future civil servants, is to always adhere to the importance of discipline, honesty, and integrity. Civil servants must always remain steadfast in their principles, avoid corruption, and prioritize honesty in their actions. Civil servants must avoid being swayed by individuals who offer tempting incentives to do as they directed or requested. Once they accept such offers or incentives, they compromise the integrity and independence of their position as civil servants. They must maintain professionalism, even in the face of political pressures, to uphold the values of the civil service. Despite the challenges posed by modern-day politics and societal norms, I urge all civil servants to stay true to their moral compass and act with integrity.

Tanthoney Komarusamy

served in the following capacities as a civil servant:

- Various administrative capacities in Resident and District Offices of First and Second Divisions (1948 – 1960; 1973 – 1975) as Clerk to Administrative Assistant, Grade I
- Acting Assistant Secretary at Kuching Rural District Council (1960–1962)
- Chief Clerk at Training Branch of Chief Secretary Office, also known as Sarawak Civil Service Training Centre (1962 – 1969)
- Administrative Assistant, Grade II at Sarawak Treasury Headquarters, Kuching (1969 – 1973)
- Assistant Secretary at Accounts/Protocol Unit in the Chief Minister's Office (1975 – 1983)
- Acting Principal Assistant Secretary at Protocol Unit in the Chief Minister's Office (1983 – 1986)



DATO TEO TIEN HIONG

I believe I am one of the longest-serving public servants in Sarawak, working a total of 55 years. I joined the service in 1972, and from then to 1991, I was with the State Planning Unit (SPU). I was the first economist to be recruited into SPU. People who were my contemporaries at SPU were Hamid Bugo, Hatta Solhi, Wan Ali Yubi, Chin Jew Bui, Abdul Aziz Husain, Wilson Baya Dandot, Jaul Samion and Wan Lizozman.

When I was at SPU, I was assigned roles in infrastructure development, regional development, rural development and utilities, among many other things. I was involved in carrying out various studies and developing plans, such as the first urban development study for Kuching, the Miri Port expansion plan to Kuala Baram, and the Bintulu regional development plan. In doing these studies and plans, I have been to almost all the nooks and crannies of Sarawak despite the underdeveloped transport system at that time.

One of the initiatives I was involved in that made a tremendous difference was the creation of airports and airstrips in rural areas of the Fourth and Fifth Divisions. This project came after the closure of “banana” airstrips, which were used by the Christian missionaries; when the missionaries left, there was no longer air access to these areas. The alternatives were very long, difficult, expensive and sometimes dangerous treks and boat rides. To address this issue, I engaged with the Federal government’s Ministry of Transport, where I had to justify the urgent need for substantial funds to develop air transport access for rural communities. It was crucial to highlight that without such access, these communities would be inclined to travel to neighbouring Kalimantan in Indonesia, which could potentially compromise Sarawak’s integrity and security. Fortunately, our efforts were rewarded, and we were able to secure the much-needed allocation. The implementation of the project was entrusted to the Public Works Department (JKR). We focused on improving existing airstrips such as Bario, Long Lellang, and Long Peluan.

One lighthearted moment I recall was when Ose Murang, our former Deputy State Secretary, who was then an officer at the Department of Agriculture, expressed his gratitude for the airstrip at Long Peluan, which was his hometown. He jokingly offered me a buffalo, which, of course, would be of no use to me in Kuching. Eventually, he playfully presented me with 10 kg of buffalo meat, saying, "Here's your buffalo." It was a lighthearted moment, but looking back, it reinforces the importance of fighting for funds to develop the necessary facilities and amenities for rural communities.

The creation of these airports and airstrips played an important role in connecting rural communities to major cities like Miri, greatly enhancing their access to essential services, economic opportunities, and educational institutions. Moreover, it bolstered Sarawak's regional connectivity and kept the State's borders more secure. This initiative exemplifies the impact that well-planned and executed infrastructure projects can have on the overall development and well-being of the rural folks in Sarawak.

Getting allocations for development from the Federal government was tricky, to say the least. Yes, we "young chicos from Sarawak", as they used to call us, were pretty direct with our approach. We would go straight to director-generals for discussions, by passing the strict hierarchy that Federal government servants normally abided by. But at least for me, I made sure that I formed good relationships with my federal counterparts. It helped that some were classmates from my years at Universiti Malaya. We needed Federal government funding, and so we had to be able to navigate our working relationship with our federal counterparts. At the end of the day, the aim was to change Sarawak through continuous, worthwhile development. That is what I appreciated the most for being in SPU.

While still at SPU, I left to pursue master's degrees in urban and regional

planning as well as public administration in the United States. While doing them, I picked up, of all things, computer programming: Turbo Pascal and BASIC programming. When I finished my studies and came back, I was asked to join the State Computerisation Committee (SCC), which was headed by the Sarawak branch of a federal department, MAMPU (Malaysian Administrative Modernisation and Management Planning Unit).

In 1991, the Sarawak government realised the importance of computerisation, and decided to develop a planned and integrated program for the computerisation of the Sarawak civil service. This led to the formation of the Sarawak Computerisation Services or SCS, which I was asked to lead, and I accepted. A few years later, I recommended changing its name to Sarawak Information Systems, also known as SAINS.

SAINS was formed as a government-owned private company in 1991. Operationally, it started in 1992. We improved most of the work processes in the government service delivery, such as the human resource system, the financial system, and bill payment. We also set up local area networks for State government offices, which was then followed by a wide area network that we called SarawakNet. In the process of establishing SarawakNet, we created a data centre and network hub located at the SAINS office at Wisma Bapa Malaysia and a bigger one later at the SAINS Samarahan office. The centres and SarawakNet were essential for building the foundation for a statewide knowledge infrastructure. We leveraged satellite technology for government agencies in rural areas, initially for Forestry outfit operation centres, Agriculture extension centres and sub-district offices.

Over the past many years, we have established software and systems that went on to win awards, such as LASIS for the Land and Survey Department Sarawak and the online court system used by Syariah courts across Malaysia.

One of the earliest projects that we did that had an impact in terms of productivity and efficiency involved creating a plant disease database for the Department of Agriculture. Agriculture had extension centres all over Sarawak. Extension workers stationed there may not know everything, especially the latest findings about plant diseases. When farmers approached them for advice on diseased plants, they needed a database that they could easily refer to. We created an information database where they could log in through the network to identify the plant disease, and what kind of treatment was required. This was especially useful throughout rural Sarawak, where there were no superior or human experts to consult with. We worked with the Department of Agriculture to collate the inventory of possible diseases and treatments and then updated the database regularly so every agriculture officer anywhere in the State could access the information.

The Sarawak government has provided strong support to SAINS to facilitate the creation of an environment for targeted ICT implementation. In 1992, when SAINS was operationalised, Sarawak ranked the lowest in terms of computerisation in the public sector. Five years later, Sarawak emerged as the state with the highest IT utilisation in the public sector in Malaysia.

To further promote ICT development, the State government established the Sarawak IT Council (SITC) at the ministerial level in early 1993, the first ICT Council in Malaysia. I think that this move by the Sarawak government led to the establishment of the National IT Council (NITC) at the Malaysian Federal government more than one year later in late 1994. The move by the Federal government greatly strengthened the development of IT in the country.

In 1999, the state government introduced a bill that led to the establishment of the Sarawak Information Technology Resource Council (SITRC) to replace the SITC. The addition of the “R” in SITRC signified the importance of knowledge

as a valuable resource long before “content” became trendy. The collaboration with the Sarawak State Library as a knowledge-based outfit further emphasised the State’s commitment to harnessing the power of IT for growth and progress. The State government then established its ICT Unit within the Chief Minister’s Department in 2001.

Despite challenges such as meeting different project requirements and helping older generation civil service officers adapt to computerisation, the Sarawak government’s commitment to ICT implementation has, I believe, laid the foundation for Sarawak’s digital economy today. The progression from computerisation to information, communication, and knowledge-based initiatives has laid a solid foundation for Sarawak’s digital economy. Through the collaborative efforts of SAINS and the State government agencies, Sarawak has embraced the opportunities and challenges presented by the digital era, positioning itself as a frontrunner in today’s digital economy.

After my studies in the US, especially with the knowledge and exposure I gained in ICT at that time, I had opportunities to work elsewhere. But I chose to come back and serve in the Sarawak civil service. This was because I believe that Sarawak has all the qualities that I am looking for, especially the unity and harmony among its people.

In my civil service career, my former colleagues and I were able to work well together regardless of our ethnic and religious differences. Our goal was simply to do what was good for Sarawak and her people.

During my tenure as a civil servant, I had the privilege of working for two essential organisations, SPU and SAINS. Both institutions were established with the purpose of contributing to the development of the State. However, one crucial difference stood out. While at SPU, I was merely an inexperienced young employee. At SAINS, I held the position of CEO. This distinction taught

me the value of having a burning desire and unwavering commitment to enact positive change for the betterment of Sarawak. Whatever position one finds oneself in within the civil service organisation, it is an opportunity to contribute positive changes to the lives of the people we serve.

My advice to civil servants is to retain this same passion and concern for your state in your hearts. Let Sarawak be your guiding force in all your actions and decision-making processes. When this genuine care for the State is present, everything else will naturally fall into place. Sarawak will flourish, and its people will benefit.

Unfortunately, in recent times, I have noticed a disheartening trend among some civil servants. They prioritise personal gain and financial stability above the interests of Sarawak. This is a dangerous path to follow, as it undermines the very purpose of the civil service. I urge civil servants to resist this temptation and remember that they have been given a unique opportunity to serve your State and its people.

However, I understand that this attribute of prioritising the concerns of Sarawak might not come naturally to everyone. Therefore, it is crucial for the civil service to inculcate this mindset. We must foster an environment where the focus remains on the State's progress rather than individual gain. While it is true that times have changed, and prosperity may be more attainable today without the threats to security and physical hardships that we experienced in the past, we must not forget that the ultimate purpose of a civil servant's life is to serve the State.

It saddens me deeply to witness individuals who engage in actions detrimental to Sarawak's well-being. We must remember that the consequences of such choices are not just limited to ourselves but impact

the lives of many. Together, let us strive to uphold the values of integrity, selflessness, and dedication that define the true essence of civil service.

I implore current and future civil servants to embrace the passion and commitment necessary to create meaningful change for Sarawak. Prioritise the welfare of the State above personal gain, and let your actions speak volumes about your dedication to serving others. By embodying these principles, we can ensure a prosperous future for Sarawak and its people.⁶

Dato Teo Tien Hiong

served in the following capacities as a civil servant:

- Executive Officer, State Planning Unit (1972);
- Deputy Director, State Planning Unit when he was called upon by the State Government in 1991 to realize its vision of a computerized civil service;
- Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of SAINS Group of Companies (April 1991 – 2017).



TAN SRI DATUK AMAR
WILSON BAYA DANDOT

I have the utmost respect for the civil service as an institution. When I was young, I looked up to civil servants with a great deal of respect and admiration. When I was granted the Colombo Plan scholarship for my tertiary education overseas, I was elated because one of the doors that it opened up for me was the opportunity to serve the government upon completion of my studies.

I joined the Sarawak civil service in March 1973 as a daily paid staff member after completing my economics degree at the University of Western Australia. I was confirmed as permanent staff in July 1973. My first appointment was as an Assistant Secretary with the State Planning Unit (SPU). I was one of the pioneer staff of SPU, which was just set up in late 1972.

I never consciously or deliberately aspired to occupy any particular position in the civil service. When I first joined the civil service, I was prepared to be sent to the remotest part of Sarawak because I knew that that was what being a civil servant entails. I was always prepared to learn and acquire new skills, competencies and knowledge in whatever tasks or position I was given. I have always looked at it this way: whatever exposure, experience or knowledge you acquire from a previous position will equip you for the next assignment. So, if you look at it that way, no job will surprise you. You will always be prepared or equipped, and the new task or assignment can only add value to what you already have, and not take away from it. If, on the other hand, you set out to pursue a particular job or position, and you were given an entirely different task from what you expected, you may end up struggling to cope with your unexpected assignment, and may end up frustrated and demoralised.

Especially in the context of the civil service, we cannot look at our work with a certain position in mind. The only target we must have is to serve the people, to add value to their lives. The only objective we must strive for is to do well in whatever task we are given, to satisfy the customers' needs and fulfil their expectations.

Looking back on my civil service history, my stint with the SPU was a key step. Having been trained as an economist, the SPU was the right place for me to start my career. SPU was mandated to plan and coordinate the development of Sarawak. At that time, we introduced a relatively new concept of planning for development and coordinating the development programmes that were being implemented throughout Sarawak. With the setting up of the SPU, we started to move towards managing development through planning and monitoring, rather than just merely providing administrative services in the execution of development programmes for the State.

My first few years at the unit honed my analytical skills and ability to see things far ahead into the future and the need to see the big picture. It was exciting to be able to craft development plans for the whole State, and see these plans become reality over the years. That was the time when we were emerging from the shadow of our colonial predecessors. We were also learning how to navigate the working relationships with our cohorts in the Federal government. I personally felt then that a lot was on our shoulders.

It was rewarding to have worked with people who have a pioneering spirit and are visionaries. We had a lot of opportunities to explore and introduce new ideas and approaches that required creativity and the ability to express these clearly. I was privileged to have worked with a group of people who were able to articulate and express ideas clearly, especially in our reports or proposals. My colleagues at SPU at that time - Tan Sri Hamid Bugo, Tan Sri Aziz Husain, Datu Dr Hatta, Datu Chin Jew Bui and Teo Tien Hiong - I must say, all had inquisitive minds, and we were always excited to share and explore new ideas for developing the State, and improving the delivery mechanisms of the Sarawak civil service.

In the early 1980s, economic development gathered momentum and development administration was in vogue. We implemented the Integrated Agriculture Development Project (IADP) which was a new approach adopted by the government to address rural poverty. I was the first Project Director and the task was to implement the RM200 million Asian Development Bank (ADB) financed project in seven years. It was an experience to set up the new office in a remote area like Saratok then, where co-ordination took place. I learnt and applied development communication at the grassroots level by talking to *temenggongs*, *penghulus* and the local populace. And through this programme, we had the opportunity to work with international organisations such as the Asian Development Bank, among others. It was exciting to be able to relate Sarawak's rural development in the context of, say, international markets for commodities and how we should be able to tap trends in commodities production so that we can reap economic benefits for the State. We had to help our farmers, who were then mostly surviving on small farm landholdings, to realise more economic benefits by convincing them to adopt better production techniques so that they can take advantage of international marketing trends for their crops.

After this project, I was privileged to be seconded to the International Pepper Commodity Secretariat based in Jakarta, Indonesia for six years. I was still attached to the SPU but was seconded there. This experience was what I

considered my “living university”. I had the opportunity to travel to India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Brazil, Hong Kong, London and many other places to attend inter-governmental meetings. It was during this time that I honed my skills in writing proposals and minutes of meetings and reports that conform to international standards, both in the quality of the report as well as in the use of the English language. We had to write those reports then in a matter of a few hours!

When I resumed my post at SPU, there was a shift from an “administration to a more development management” orientation within the civil service. When our former Prime Minister, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad introduced the “Malaysia Inc” concept, which later became a government policy, we were able to understand and accept it as a philosophy of cooperation and partnership between the private sector and us, the public sector, in bringing about the economic transformation of our country.

As civil servants, we had to have a paradigm shift of looking at the private sector as our “partners” in development. I recall our then Chief Minister (the late TYT Tun Pehin Sri Haji Abdul Taib Mahmud) telling us to “look at the efforts of the private sector to seek for opportunity for profit or expansion in business as a situation which can open up a much wider role for them to enhance the development of the country as a whole, even in areas which used to be largely the responsibility of the government previously.”

Since then, we have cultivated a symbiotic relationship with the private sector here in Sarawak. Among us in the civil service, we recognise the important role that the private sector plays in our country’s progress and development. In the same token, the private sector understands the public sector’s role of formulating and implementing various systems and procedures that facilitate business processes and operations in the country while ensuring that the interests of the citizens are safeguarded.

As State Secretary, I made it one of my priorities to enhance greater public-private sector facilitation and communication. The private sector is the engine of economic growth, while the public sector, through its various ministries, agencies, and departments, is the catalyst for changes that will facilitate business growth and expansion. In this context, civil servants cannot afford to slow down the growth of the private sector by being inefficient, unprofessional and unethical. It is the task of the SCS to provide them with the fastest possible assistance and decision without compromising on legal and ethical standards. Only with this effective coordination and collaboration between the private and public sectors can Sarawak become more competitive in the globalised

world that demands speed, timeliness, cost efficiency, and value-added services.

We have proven that this partnership works as evidenced by Sarawak's economic growth over the years. And as our economic growth trajectory becomes even more robust under YAB Premier Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri (Dr) Abang Haji Abdul Rahman Zohari Bin Tun Datuk Abang Haji Openg, this collaboration becomes even more crucial.

As a civil servant, I have always been guided by our calling to set an example of a professional, effective and compassionate organisation. And so, when I was appointed as the State Secretary, I sought to emphasise the concept of "An Honour to Serve".

"An Honour to Serve" is not just a symbolic creed. Being a civil servant is a privilege and should be regarded as an honour. It is very much integrated into the philosophy of the civil service and must be a mantra for all civil servants. This underpins the culture of responsibility, dedication and continuous improvement within the civil service. This is the core foundation of our tasks to provide excellent customer service to the public.

I initiated some measures to enhance the personality, ethics and image of the civil service. I emphasised that anything and everything that is of and about, and associated with the Sarawak civil service, must live up to the image of a professional civil servant. This includes the physical structures and surroundings, which must be clean at all times, with a welcoming and friendly ambience. The way the civil servants carry themselves – their manner of speech, appearance (dressing and grooming), and how they relate to others politely and gently – must set them apart as a breed of distinction. It doesn't matter what our rank or position is; all civil servants must always carry themselves with pride, not arrogance, because they are a part of a revered and distinguished public institution.

As the State Secretary, I often reminded myself that the position I hold legitimises my authority but it does not give me actual power. The power comes from the sense of purpose and commitment that I bring to my job, when I choose to apply my will, heart and soul with passion to help transform society and our communities. No matter our station in life, we are powerful only if we are changing people's lives for the better.

I made it my priority to "get into the trenches ", as often as I could, in order to foster a "site visit – see to verify" work culture among our civil servants. I enjoined heads of departments to schedule frequent working visits and

meetings to district and sub-district offices so that they can immediately verify and respond appropriately to the people's concerns and needs. We needed to be in touch with our people and the situations they face on the ground. We could not serve people well if we were not directly in touch and in tune with their needs and concerns.

During those site visits, I would take note of how our civil servants on the ground fulfilled their duties despite the challenges they faced. For example, I know of one SAO who did not use the lack of a government vehicle as an excuse for him not to visit the remote longhouses or kampungs in his area. Instead, he applied his resourcefulness, ingenuity and networking skills to work around that problem. He requested the logging companies in his area to allow him to hitch a ride in their logging trucks so that he could regularly visit the people.

This is one good example of how a civil servant, who is truly committed to serving the people, is able to go beyond his limitations so as not to compromise on the quality of his service. This kind of resourcefulness, professionalism and commitment to help the people must be part of all civil servants' DNA. Those qualities are what I am glad to take note of and commend whenever I visit our staff on the ground. I tried to pay due attention to our people on the ground. They make the wheels of our civil service machinery work and function well.

I paid attention to improving the maintenance of SCS buildings, facilities and other physical infrastructures throughout Sarawak. This entailed not only enhancing the physical appearance of the offices but also creating a positive atmosphere for both employees and visitors. The transformation of buildings like Wisma Bapa Malaysia and district offices started during my time as State Secretary, making them more welcoming and modern.

When it comes to the issue of taking proper care of and preserving our physical infrastructures, such as our roads and buildings, especially those that are funded and built with government resources (in effect by the people's money), I am strongly motivated by the meaning and symbolism of these structures, other than by the functional or pragmatic reasons why we need to have and maintain these facilities.

When we consider Sarawak's unique geographical features and challenges, then we can clearly see what the physical presence of civil service means to the people. Sarawak is so vast, with a land area that is equivalent to the size of all the states in Peninsular Malaysia combined. At the same time, our

population of only 2.9 million is widely dispersed throughout this vast land of ours. The physical presence of the civil service, in the form of government structures and facilities and, most importantly, in the people we have on the ground means so much to the people.

In our rural areas, it is a challenge for some of our people to come to our government offices. Usually, they come to our offices only when they have pressing matters of concern - matters that their *ketua kampung* or village chief is not able to help them with. Imagine what a person would most probably feel once he finally reaches his destination - a government office. If the office is clean and has a cosy, friendly atmosphere, and if the civil servant assigned there attends to him with a warm, welcoming, attentive, sympathetic and compassionate attitude, then that would have made his journey worthwhile.

The presence of our civil servants and facilities and structures in any place are able to give the people the assurance that things are being taken care of, that there is someone they can go to for help, advice and direction. The civil service serves much more than the “functional” role of providing services to the people. It also plays a “symbolic” role. Depending on how we look at and perform our tasks as civil servants, the civil service institution becomes a symbol of hope or dejection, of a future that is either bright or bleak, of a society that is either warm and caring or indifferent and pathetic.

Whenever we do our part, in small and simple ways of creating, restoring and maintaining the beauty and cleanliness of our government properties and landmarks, we are not just doing it for ourselves. Our simple efforts – like making sure there are no chipped paints, cracked tiles or broken window panes or keeping pathways clear of clutter and lined with potted plants – speak of our desire to honour and value what we have accomplished through the years. And, equally important, it speaks of the life of quality and excellence that we would want our children and their children to emulate from us.

That is the real fundamental reason why we should take every means possible to maintain and preserve government properties and public landmarks. In all the physical structures – buildings, roads, bridges, monuments, parks, seaports, airports, etc. – for which we are now responsible for caring, upgrading or improving, we not only receive amenities and facilities that make our day-to-day lives of work and leisure much more comfortable and efficient. We had also received the stories of the struggles and the victories of those who had come before us as they sought to provide us with a future that was much better than what they had inherited from their forefathers. We will not do justice to the hard work, dedication and commitment of our predecessors if

we do shoddy work today, and destroy or damage whatever they have handed down to us.

The way a civil servant carries himself or herself is also a reflection of the stature of the country that he or she is from. Sarawak civil servants must always carry themselves with a sense of dignity at all times and conduct themselves professionally, befitting the institution that they are part of.

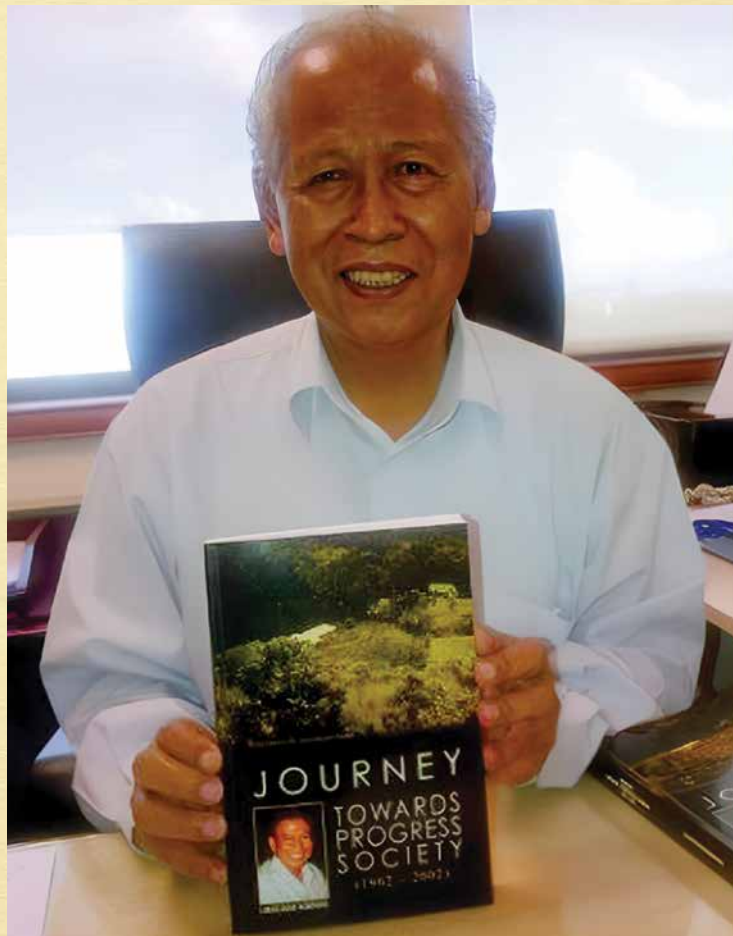
The SCS has come a long way since Sarawak's independence within Malaysia 60 years ago. The sense of urgency to duty and service remains the basic and essential foundation of our civil service organisation. For those of us who began our careers during the early years of the SCS (within the Malaysian Federation), this was a fact that we had to embrace and be committed to through all the toils and turmoils that we had to go through then. It is this passionate commitment to service and the wisdom that we have gained through the rich and varied experiences and exposure we had to go through all these years that we are proud to share and impart to the civil servants of today and in the future. Our organisation has evolved into a strong, resilient and dynamic institution, able to meet the demands of changing times. We are now able to hold our own in the company of our peers both at the national and international levels, and also among corporate personalities, both here and abroad.

We must have high respect for the civil service institution – what it stands for and symbolises in our society and our roles as civil servants. We represent, and we must always strive to exemplify the highest standards of caring, compassionate and professional service to society.⁶

Tan Sri Datuk Amar Wilson Baya Dandot

served in the following capacities as a civil servant:

- Chief Executive Officer, Regional Corridor Development Authority (RECODA) (2009 – 2017);
- State Secretary, Sarawak State Government, (2007 – 2009);
- Deputy State Secretary, Sarawak State Government (2000 – 2006);
- Director, State Planning Unit (1995 – 2000);
- Deputy Director / Principal Assistant Director, State Planning Unit (1990 – 1994);
- Project Director, Kalaka-Saribas IADP (1986 – 1989);
- Principal Assistant Secretary, State Planning Unit (1983 – 1985);
- Assistant Secretary, Agriculture Sector, State Planning Unit (1973 - 1977).



LIMAN NUMPANG

My first career began as a volunteer with the Budu Community Development Centre. I came back to Budu in September 1961 and worked as a volunteer at the Community Development Centre rendering various types of voluntary services in that area. In normal circumstances in those days it would take about two days to paddle the longboat upriver from Saratok town to Budu Community Development Centre.

After serving as a volunteer for almost three years at the Budu Community Development Centre, I received a letter from Kuching offering me a job in the State civil service. On 23rd January 1965 I reported to work as a Sarawak Administrative Officer in the District Office Simanggang. At first I found the work so different from what I used to do and had difficulty adjusting to the discipline and the code of conduct of a civil servant.

This was during the height of the confrontation between Malaysia and Indonesia. In addition to the normal and routine administrative matters, I was given duties in connection with security matters.

An experience that I encountered was when a group of people from a longhouse in Ulu Undup came to report that their land at Tinting Kah had been claimed by another group of Iban from the next longhouse nearby. I was advised by the Senior SAO who was sitting next to me that the initial step to be taken was to inspect the land before it could be discussed to sort out the dispute. A date was fixed for them to inform the other party of a visit to the land in dispute. I went by road up to Batu Lintang Undup and from there we walked on foot for about three hours to reach the area. When we reached the site the other party was not present at all. They showed me the direction of the longhouse which was a few miles away from the disputed area. I looked at the map and to my surprise, I realised that they were on the other side of the border in Indonesia. Realising the danger we were in, I directed everybody to leave the area immediately and advised them to come to the District Office the following day.

The second experience I had was when the local people from Upper Undup reported that the Indonesian soldiers came to their longhouses one

evening and informed them that they would come back one day to attack the Malaysian Army Camp at Batu Lintang Undup. They were told that the Indonesian soldiers would gather all the able men from their longhouses to join them in attacking the camp. The local people had to vacate their longhouses and construct a temporary longhouse behind the bazaar at Batu Lintang Undup. I was directed by the District Officer to visit the area and assess the situation. I took the bus to Undup. On arrival at Batu Lintang I met one local who was an interpreter with the army. We walked all the way through the footpath from one longhouse to another at Rampu Wee, Temiang, Ijok and Munggu Ruan. Except for one longhouse at Temiang, all the longhouses had been abandoned.

The other experience that I could remember was when Tuan Resident told me to investigate a claim by the owner of a rubber garden which was destroyed by a fire resulting from the firing of artillery towards the Indonesian Border by the Malaysian Army at Sungai Tenggang. Barely after ten minutes walk towards the border, the guide who was behind me shouted informing me to stand still and not to make any move. Looking down in front of me, I noticed one bobby trap on the footpath only about one foot away.

When the Confrontation ended, I thought I had seen the last of dangerous days. In November 1970, I was transferred to Bintangor District. At that time, Bintangor, Sarikei, Kanowit, Kapit, Mukah and Sibu districts were still under the then Third Division with Divisional Headquarters at Sibu. The whole of the Third Division had been declared as a Black Area because of the communist insurgency.

I was assigned to the Matu/Daro sub-district when the District Officer called me to come back urgently to Bintangor. There was no reason stated. Upon my arrival, the District Officer hinted that there would be an urgent matter which needed the full participation of all the staff. Later that evening an announcement was made by Radio Malaysia that the government had declared the Third Division to be under 24-hour curfew. Everybody was told to remain indoors.

The next morning a police vehicle turned up at my house and brought me to the Police Station. There were two other SAOs, Peter Siburat and Peter Ling, already in the office. The District Officer gave a quick briefing on our immediate tasks to be carried out during the curfew hours. The most urgent job was to inform the people not to come out from their houses and at the same time to make sure there was sufficient food supply for them.

In August 1971, a military operation codenamed “Operation Ngayau” was launched in an all-out effort to curb the increasing threat posed by the communist terrorists in the Third Division. To facilitate the operation, a round-the-clock curfew was imposed in parts of Sibu, Sarikei and Bintangor districts. Operation Ngayau was extended further into the interior of the Pakan sub-district. I was flown by helicopter from Bintangor to Nanga Kedup in Ulu Wak, where I was supposed to team up with the army from the 8th Battalion, Royal Malay Regiment, who had come all the way from Wong Padong Camp, Sri Aman. The area assigned to them was the whole length of the Wak area commencing from Pakan town right up to Ulu Julau to carry out security operations for one month.

The communist terrorist (CT) threat in Sarawak, particularly in the Third Division became a matter of grave concern. The militant CTs committed acts of atrocities and intimidation on innocent civilians suspected of working for the Security Forces. The worsening security situation compelled the Government on 26th March 1972 to declare the then Third Division a “Special Security Area” codenamed Rajang Area Security Command (RASCOM). It was a joint Civil, Police and Military Command with its headquarters staffed by Civil, Police and Military personnel. RASCOM covered the Sibu, Kapit and Sarikei Divisions. This was to ensure that the Government machinery was fully geared and mobilised to maintain public security and safety.

Civil servants in the area were involved in the security operation under the Civic Action Group (CAG). Our mission was to carry out the psychological warfare work. We were tasked to meet as many people as possible and win their support for government efforts to curb communism.

One of the assignments I received was to lead the CAG covering the Katibas areas. Together with our team were representatives from the relevant

departments such as Agriculture, Welfare, Cooperative, Medical, Information and Police (Special Branch). We were flown by Nuri helicopter right into the interior, to the last longhouse of the upper reaches of the Katibas. From here on, we visited all the communities downstream from the Upper Katibas. Our mode of movement downriver was by longboats and on foot from one longhouse to another.

The mission of the CAG Team was to carry out psychological warfare. The task was to neutralise the influence upon the local people who might be inclined to sympathise with the activities carried out by the communist terrorists. We organised “meet the people” sessions, where we convinced them not to be entangled with the futile activities of the CTs. Where possible, we also organised “gotong royong” activities, such as repairing their longhouses or helping them with their harvest, to win their goodwill. While our military counterparts were engaged in fighting the communists, we were also involved in a battle to win the people’s hearts and minds.

The entire operation covering all the longhouses in the Katibas area lasted for six months. Having been involved with the security operation for almost one year, it was decided that I should be posted to Rajang Security Command (RASCOM) to carry out full-time work on security matters.

Under RASCOM, I was appointed to take charge of the Food Denial Exercise and also the Tenants Registration Exercise. I was also given the responsibility to oversee the regrouping and resettlement of the local folks in areas where the communists-insurgency had been on the increase and thus, endangering the safety of the local folks. Thus the regrouping and resettlement schemes were established in those areas. These schemes were intended to provide security protection as well as development for the people affected by the communist threat.

The first Regrouping and Resettlement Exercise codenamed “Operation Empuru” was launched as a result of the wanton murder of the late Penghulu Imban at Rumah Balang, Ulu Oya on 26th January 1971. Due to fear, insecurity and harassment by the CTs, the entire population of a number of longhouses from Oya, Ngemah and Tada flocked into Nanga Sekuau to seek protection under the Area Security Unit (Border Scout Post).

The government launched another operation codenamed “Operation Bebatak”. It was to avoid further harassment and intimidation by the CTs in the Kanowit District where the people from Sungai Kabah abandoned their longhouses and farms to seek refuge near the Area Security Unit Post on 12th December 1972 at Nanga Tada. Similarly the people in Sungai Ngemah flocked into the Area Security Post at Nanga Jagau on 2nd April 1973 while Nanga Ngungun took place on 12th July 1973.

A major victory was achieved on 21st October 21, 1973 with the launching of Operation Sri Aman, which saw the surrender of 264 Communist militants. This marked the end of the communist threat in Sarawak.

My last and most memorable experience as a civil servant was when I was posted to Belaga in January 1996 and assigned to carry out the relocation of the local people affected by the Bakun Hydroelectric Project (HEP).

The implementation of Bakun HEP prompted the Government to resettle 15 longhouse settlements living within the reservoir area of Batang Balui into the Asap and Koyan areas of the upper Belaga river. The relocation programme involved moving a total of 1,639 families with a population of 9,428 people comprising five ethnic groups of Orang Ulu, namely: Kayan, Kenyah, Lahanan, Ukit and Penan. Apart from the 15 longhouse settlements, there were 7 primary schools, 6 medical clinics, 3 agriculture stations and 2 up-river agents stations affected. In complying with the directives, the relevant Government agencies had to play their roles with full dedication to carry out their responsibilities such as:

1. Planning and implementation of the Resettlement Project;
2. Conducting public awareness campaigns;
3. Surveying works at the reservoir area and resettlement site;
4. Documentation of material culture and inventory survey of cemeteries and graves; and
5. Relocation of the affected communities.

The relocation exercise was not only the biggest task but also the most difficult one ever carried out by the Government in terms of communication and logistics. The affected people had to travel by river for about 150 kilometres in the case of the farthest longhouse at Long Jawe, they had to go through dangerous rapids such as in the cases of Giam Naha, Giam Kromo, Giam Ayu and Giam Daha and then by overland through another 80 kilometres of rough logging tracks and climbing the steep hills. The journey was terrifying, and tough, rough and dangerous.

The lives of the displaced communities were affected in a very painful way. They had been uprooted from their original place – the place that they had lived in and loved for ages. The longhouses, the land and the gardens were left behind. The familiar beautiful green forest and the hills where they used to go for hunting and gathering food were also left behind. Their ancestral graves and sacred places were also abandoned. One day, all of this would disappear under the water when the Bakun Dam is completed. It is accepted that the single largest social impact by the Bakun HEP was upon human settlements living within the area that would become the reservoir, while the most unavoidable impact upon the population of the middle and upper Balui was their relocation. Hence resettlement and ensuring the welfare of the people to be resettled was as integral a part of the project as the dam construction itself.

The state government drew up the plan very carefully so that the Bakun Resettlement Area would be equipped with a socio-cultural and economic environment that was not completely dissimilar from what the affected communities had in their original places.

There was, of course, no guarantee that the settlers would be happy upon their arrival at the relocated site even with the availability of modern amenities. This was not because the Resettlement Area was inferior to their original place of abode in terms of physical setting and the provision of amenities and facilities. It was just that they had a strong feeling of attachment to their old place, particularly among the old folks.

We, the civil servants, had to carry out our important role of helping the people adjust to this major change in their lives. The relocation of the communities

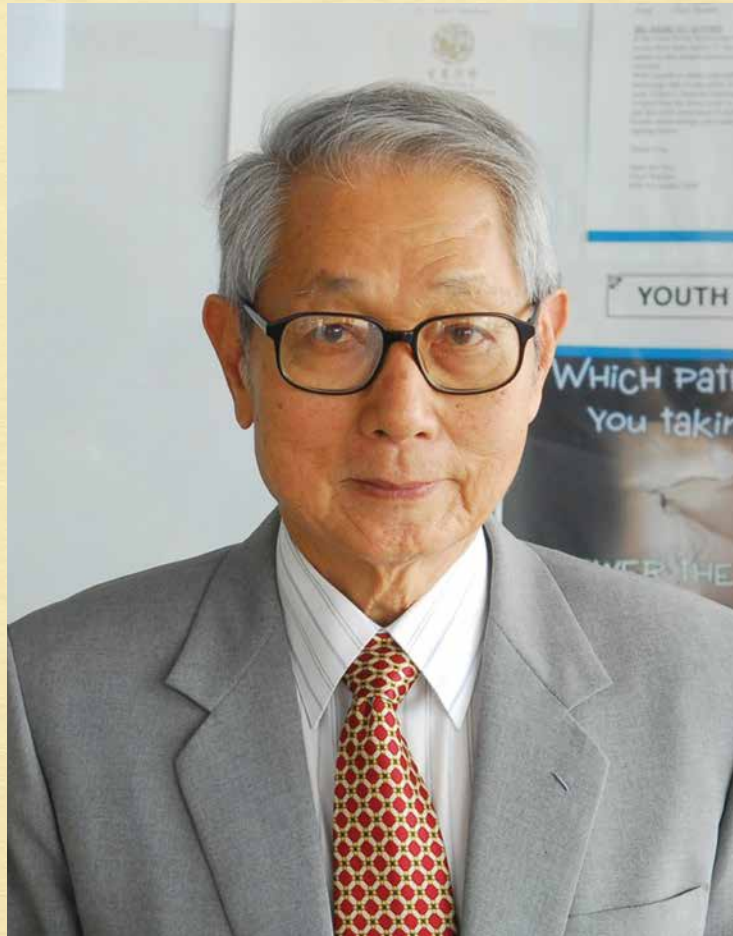
not only enabled the country to tap the renewable source of power and energy but also acted as the main catalyst to the improvement of their standard of living. These were for the betterment of their future generations.

As a civil servant, I find it most meaningful and fulfilling that I was able to do my own part in shaping a better future for the next generations of Sarawakians.⁶

Liman Numpang (Deceased)

served in the following capacities as a civil servant:

- Sarawak Administrative Officer in 1965;
- Assistant Staff Officer (Public Relations) in the Rejang Security Command (RASCOM);
- Staff Officer (Regrouping and Resettlement), RASCOM;
- District Officer, Saratok and Sri Aman until his retirement in 1995;
- Co-ordinating Officer of the Bakun Hydroelectric Project from 1996 to 2003.



WILLIAM TANG TIENG KEE

I was doing quite well in the private sector but somehow the lure of the civil service made me leave that job to join the Sarawak Administrative Service in 1951. Immediately after sitting for my Junior Cambridge Examinations, I applied to join the Sarawak Administrative Service (SAS). I was accepted and was instructed to report to the Resident of Sibü. I reported for duty on 10th June 1952 and I commenced work straightaway as a temporary clerk while waiting for the in-service training in October of that year. Together with three other colleagues, Joseph Chua, Enjop Jarraw and the late Wan Ali Tuanku Ibrahim, we left Sibü on 23rd September 1952 for Kuching by M.V. Meluan. This boat was usually slow, doing at most about 5 knots. We were given a deck passage but a kind officer on the boat upgraded us to a big room on the upper deck. We arrived in Kuching the next day.

A year passed very quickly and we completed our in-service training in September 1953. We were each given our posting order. I was posted to Simanggang. At that time I had no inkling where this place was but I was told that it would take about 2 days to reach there. Upon enquiring further, I discovered that I had to choose a suitable time to leave in order to be able to arrive in Simanggang during daylight hours. There were about three boats plying between Kuching and Simanggang and very often they would also want to arrive on the same day. I waited 4 days to board the boat, a wooden boat but with better speed than M.V. Meluan. Luckily, passengers were given simple meals on board. They had to spend a night at Lingga to wait for a suitable tide to proceed upstream. It was here that I had my first experience of witnessing a tidal bore (*benak*). It was quite scary for a first timer. There were to be a series of 'firsts' in my early career waiting to surprise me.

In Simanggang, I was met on arrival by the driver of the District Office with a Land Rover. He brought me to my quarters. It was about 4 o'clock on a Sunday afternoon. These quarters together with a number of other similar buildings were constructed with their fronts facing the jungle, their kitchens or the backs facing the road. I was quite intrigued by the sight but after facing the jungle at night for a few days, one would get so lonesome and that was when homesickness would set in. I felt quite miserable at times.

Just as I was about to get settled in, I received instructions that I would be transferred to Saratok. I was told that a government launch was scheduled to leave Simanggang for Saratok in early December and I should take it. I also found out that the other passengers on that journey were the Superintendent of Lands and Surveys, a Polish man and the officer-in-charge

of PWD, Simanggang, the late Edmond Voon. I came to know Voon while in Simanggang because he used to teach me how to play badminton. He was a very good player himself.

On arrival in Saratok, I was quite shocked to see the condition of the town. It had a raised earth road and there was a row of wooden shophouses on stilts on each side of the road. Each block of shophouses was connected to the road by a few plank walks. There were a couple of coffee shops and only one single food shop occupying what used to be a police *pondok*.

I was allocated a quarters normally reserved for the Native Officers. It was slightly larger than ordinary Class IV quarters. This quarters was quite old and built on the top of a hillock. On one side was a disused cemetery, with a few tombstones jutting out but barely visible. The sight really scared me off and I decided not to occupy it and I stayed with another officer from the Co-operative Department by the name of Alexander Nanang in his semi-detached quarters. Unfortunately, at that time he was away on travelling duty to the rural areas and would only be back two days later. Fortunately, the boat that took me to Saratok would only leave in 3 days' time. Thus, for the first two nights in Saratok I stayed on board keeping the late Edmond Voon company.

The month of December is the middle of the *landas* season and normally one would expect more rainy days. *Landas* in Saratok at that time would really be quite unpleasant. The road would be muddy and one had to stay indoors most of the time. There was no electricity. We had to depend on pressure lamps or ordinary kerosene lamps. The quarters at that time did not have mosquito proofing and we had to use mosquito nets. The life was so different from what I used to enjoy in Sibul.

There were many occasions during my first few weeks in the service that I thought of quitting the service to return to Sibul. Had it not been for the encouragement given to me by my very good friend and mentor, Dato Sri Peter Tinggom, I believe I might have left the service. At that time, Peter was the SAO in charge of Roban, a distance of about 3 hours walk. He came to know about my misery and came to visit me just before the Christmas holidays in 1953.

Peter had the knack of befriending a person and making him feel welcome. He was responsible for initiating me into the Iban culture, which was a great help to me in passing the SAO examinations. During the Christmas holidays,

he took me to visit a longhouse not very far from Saratok town. It was there that I first witnessed the Iban's traditional welcome accorded to government officers and it was also there that I was surprised to find that I could converse easily with the longhouse folks in English. Most of them were educated and many of them received their education in Kuching.

It was in this longhouse that Peter Tinggom introduced me to the longhouse folks by using the term '*Konsil China*'. At the time, local administrative service was only open to native officials known as Native Officers. Many of these officers were Malay officers and presumably many of them came from the 'Abang' family. Thus, in the old days, when among the Iban and the Chinese, the Native Officers were commonly addressed as 'Abang'. The Iban Native Officers were normally addressed as '*Konsil*'. I believe it was after 1950 that the Sarawak Administrative Service was created and Chinese officers were also recruited.

When I resolved to stay in the civil service, I began to seriously improve myself. After about 7 months in Saratok and with the help of various officers, I decided to sit for the SAO lower standard examinations. I was quite surprised that I managed to obtain a good passing grade for my native languages and the customary laws. Although I studied my Malay language, I found it more difficult to master than the Iban language. Thus, in the examinations, what I did was translate Malay into English and from English into Iban. I believed the examiners must have thought that this guy knew a little of both the Malay and Iban whereas in actual fact I was weak in my Malay language!

While I was with the Kalaka Mixed Local Authority (now Saratok District Council), I concentrated my efforts on setting up primary schools. The local longhouse folks were very encouraging as they wholeheartedly supported the local authority's proposals on primary education. All of them agreed to put up simple school buildings with basic furniture made from sawn logs on a gotong royong basis. The building would have earth floor. The walls were of bamboo strips and covered with atap roof.

Within 1 year, about 20 new primary schools were established. This success was largely due to the combined efforts of the school Affairs Officer, the late Philip Bedus and some councillors as well as the encouragement given by the Divisional Education Officer, 2nd Division. When the State held the first local government conference in 1956, I was invited to present a paper on primary education in Kalaka District.

While attending the conference, I was told by the Secretary for Local Government that I would soon be transferred out from Saratok. I tried to wrangle a transfer to Sibu or Binatang (Bintangor) but this was turned down. A month or so later, the Resident of Second Division, paid a visit to Saratok and at the official reception, he directed me to pack my things and to follow him back to Simanggang the next morning.

That was how I was transferred back to Simanggang. Whilst there, my main duty was to help form the District Council for Batang Lupar, Lubok Antu and Saribas. In consultation with the respective DOs, I had to help draw up their Constitution Order. This Order would, among other matters, specify the number of councillors the Council should have and would also include a provision that for the purpose of election, the Council's area would be divided into electoral divisions made by the Resident. Once a District Council had been constituted, I was directed to help its Secretary and officials to run the Council.

After a year of doing this advisory work, I was again transferred and this time to Engkilili, not very far from Simanggang. Here, I was back to perform the normal SAO's functions and sitting as magistrate both in Engkilili and Lubok Antu. After about a year in Engkilili, I was awarded an in-service training to study for the Diploma in Social and Public Administration in South Devon Technical College in Torquay, England. This was a one-year course. I left in August 1958 for the United Kingdom.

It was a very intensive course but the subjects offered and the lectures given by the lecturers had a bias towards the local government system based on UK practice. During the course, we were given the opportunity to compare the various types of local government systems. We also compared democracy with other forms of government, including communism. The course broadened my outlook on public administration, especially the local government administration based on the UK practice.

At the end of the course, I was attached to Leeds City Council in the north of England for a month to observe and learn its system. I returned to Sarawak in September 1959, after spending more than 3 weeks on board a ship from Southampton to Singapore. The sea journey itself was an experience and I must say that I was very grateful for the government permitted me to come back by sea. When the Crown Agents sent me the ticket, I was pleasantly surprised to find that it was a first class passage!

Upon my return from the UK, I was transferred to Sarikei. It was a peaceful town and in addition to the usual administrative duties, I had to sit as magistrate in the Police Court (Second Class Magistrate's Court). The year following that saw great changes in the district. It was the time when Malaysia was first mooted. When the proposal to form Malaysia was conceptualised, I was directed by the Sarikei DO to explain the concept to the Chinese community in and around Sarikei.

I found out then that there existed a group of anti-Malaysia supporters who were more inclined towards an underground movement. I reported the matter to the DO. After receiving my report and weighing the situation, the DO agreed to cease having these meet-the-people sessions. I only discovered that some of my friends actually belonged to the underground subversive organisation when I took the board of visitors to visit the detention centre at mile 7 Kuching/Serian Road. At that time I was the Principal Assistant Secretary (PAS) in the Federal Secretary's Office and one of my duties was to take the board of visitors to visit the detention centre every month. In each block of the centre I would meet one or two of my friends. I would exchange greetings with them and talk to them also.

From Sarikei, I was transferred to Serian in the first quarter of 1962, at the height of the Confrontation period. I was appointed the Secretary of the Upper Sadong District Council, now known as the Serian District Council. When Tebedu was attacked by the Indonesians, I was directed to proceed there the very next day to survey and ascertain the actual situation and submit a report. I managed to hitch a ride with the British Green Beret. The road condition was appalling. We managed to reach the town after four hours of rough ride. On arrival, I proceeded straightaway to interview the shopkeepers, the Kapitan China who was also a councillor, the local police officer in charge of the station, and some *kampung* folks who happened to be in the town. That night the town was deserted but with the permission of the shopkeeper, my friend and I put up the night in his shop. He and all other town folks left to take shelter in the nearby longhouses.

Immediately after Malaysia day in 1963, I was transferred to Kuching. While in Kuching, I had the opportunity to serve as PAS in various agencies and departments, namely the State Financial Secretary's Office; the Ministry of Communications and Works; the State Development Office; the Federal Secretary's Office; and the Ministry of Local Government, Youth and Culture. I also served as Acting Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Local

Government and as Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Communications and Works.

In 1968, I was selected to attend a public administration course for three months at Carlton University in Ottawa, Canada. In 1969, I had the privilege to lead a group of four councillors to visit various types of local authorities in the UK for a month. We travelled by van from Inverness in Scotland to Lands End, the very southern tip of England. It was a very beneficial visit for the councillors. To me, it was like a refresher course to experience the actual working of the various local authorities that I learned when attending the Torquay Diploma Course.

In September 1978, I was transferred to be the Resident of Sibü. This was quite a change, especially after a break of 15 years in Kuching. In Sibü, I began to polish my Foochow, Malay and Iban languages. After a year as a Resident, I was directed to take over the duties of the Chief Executive Officer of the Rajang Security Command (RASCÖM). A week after I assumed the duties of CEO of RASCÖM, I received an envelope sent through the Post Office. It contained a progress report by the underground Communist organisation to all its comrades on the achievement of the organisation. This was the first and last communication that I received as a 'comrade' from the CCO.

The work of the CEO, RASCÖM was challenging, as I had to deal with the three components, i.e. the Civilian, Military and the Police that made up the command. There were numerous field trips to the forward areas, and the longhouses. Depending on the security situation, I often had to lead our team to conduct civic assemblies or meet-the-people sessions. We established three resettlement schemes and I had to visit them regularly to meet the settlers.

RASCÖM was a unique organisation. In retrospect, I would say that it had been very successful in dealing with the underground subversive elements. Its success was well known to many foreign nations as each year we had visits from the foreign military or police officers to our headquarters as well as our forward locations and the resettlement schemes. RASCÖM also enjoyed full support from members of the public although many of them might have been occasionally inconvenienced by our operations.

After 5 years in Sibü, I was transferred back to Kuching in 1984 to take over the post of Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Local Government. I retired on 16th March 1987 in that capacity. After spending my accumulated leave, I was

re-engaged as the Secretary of the Kuching Municipal Council and in that capacity, I served for slightly over two years. Upon leaving KMC, I was offered the post of Administrative Officer, Special Duty in the Ministry of Environment and Public Health.

I am glad that in most of the stations I was posted, I had managed to leave an imprint, especially the following:

- (a) in Saratok, promotion of primary education among the rural people;
- (b) in Simanggang, formation of District Councils for the Districts;
- (c) in Sarikei, helping to propagate the concept of Malaysia;
- (d) in Serian, contribute a little towards the restoration of normalcy in Tebedu;
- (e) in Sibu, helping to eliminate the threats of CCO.

There is only one thing I can say about half a century of my career in the Sarawak civil service, and that is, if I were to be born again and given a choice on what I would like to do, I would choose the same career that I have enjoyed so much in this life. I experienced a lot of happiness which was occasionally laced with disappointments. I have failed in some undertakings but I have succeeded in many projects. The sum total of happiness and success far outweighs the unpleasant moments.⁶

William Tang Tieng Kee (Deceased)

served in the following capacities as a civil servant:

- Sarawak Administrative Officer (SAO);
- District Officer (DO);
- Resident, Sibu;
- Chief Executive Officer, RASCOM;
- Principal Assistant Secretary (PAS), State Financial Secretary's Office;
- PAS in the Ministry of Communications and Works;
- PAS in the State Development Office;
- PAS in the Federal Secretary's Office and Ministry of Local Government, Youth and Culture; Acting Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Local Government;
- Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Communications and Works.



DATO SRI YAO PING HUA

I joined the Sarawak Government Service on 8th April 1940 at the age of 17 when Sarawak was still under the White Rajah rule. I served in the Kapit District Office throughout the Japanese occupation of Sarawak from 1942 to August 1945. I was alone, and there were no quarters available for my accommodation. But I got to know the second clerk at the R&DO, Abdul Hamid. He was kind and invited me to stay with him and his family. His mother treated me like I was one of the family. I taught the Malay boys in the villages how to play basketball and volleyball, and they taught me the Malay language, which proved useful later in my career. I also met a Native Officer, Abang Anuar Bin Abang Matang, in the office. He taught me how to write romanised Malay as he needed me to help him write letters. I learnt to write in Malay that way.

My job then also required me to interact with the Iban for tax collection purposes. During the rule of the Rajah's time, head tax collected from the Iban was in the form of farm produce like padi and this was termed "*pupu*". On every occasion, I would accompany the Iban to the padi store on the ground floor of the district office to measure the equivalent amount of tax in padi. From such interactions, I learned about the Iban language and culture.

This willingness to accept and be open to other cultural influences became very useful especially in my job later as a District Officer and Resident. Submitting myself to my surroundings enabled me to bring down the barriers of communication between the people and the government.

From Kapit, I moved on to the Sibu Resident's Office until April 1957. In May of that year, I was appointed as an Assistant Clerk of Councils (the Council Negri and the Supreme Council). In 1960, I was sent to London for a three-month attachment at the House of Commons to observe and learn Parliamentary practices and procedures. My attachment to the House of Commons was one of the most interesting events in my life. I was the first local officer sent for such kind of training. My successors, Peter Chong and Maslan, as Clerks of Councils, were also sent for the same training.

While in London, through the arrangements made between the then Chief Secretary of Sarawak and the British Colonial Office in London, I was allowed to inspect the Minutes of meetings of the Executive Councils of various Colonial Territories in the Archives of the Colonial Office. At that time, the Chief Secretary was not happy about the way the Minutes of Sarawak Supreme Council meetings were done, and he wanted me to study closely the way minutes of various Executive Councils of different Colonial Territories were

recorded. He wanted the Minutes of our own Supreme Council meetings to be made more concise and comprehensive. I also had the opportunity to visit the headquarters of the British Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) located opposite the House of Commons. I met the then Secretary-General of the CPA and discussed with him the possibility of reviving the functions of the CPA Sarawak Branch.

When I returned to Sarawak, I prepared a pamphlet on 'Notes on Procedure in the Council Negri' for use by the members. The pamphlet was approved by the Chief Secretary, who was also the President of the Council Negri. With his approval, I invited Mr. Charles Gordon, the Fourth Clerk at the Table of the British House of Commons, to come to Kuching to help revise the Standing Orders of the Council Negri which were later adopted. I also introduced a new pattern of writing the Minutes of the Supreme Council meetings. The Chief Secretary was very satisfied with the change. Also, with the consent of the Chief Secretary, the Sarawak Branch of the CPA convened a meeting of all CPA branches in South East Asia in Kuching in the fall of 1960. Australia and New Zealand sent observers to the meeting.

In February/March 1962 and August/September of the same year, the Cobbold Commission and the United Nations Assessment Team, respectively, were in Sarawak to ascertain the views of the people of Sarawak regarding the formation of Malaysia. I was assigned to both groups as their Liaison Officer and Chief Interpreter. Although there were some protests against Sarawak joining Malaya, Sabah and Singapore to form Malaysia, the majority of the people agreed with the proposal. On reflection, I would say that the Sarawak people had made a wise choice to accept the merger, thus enabling the State to achieve her independence within Malaysia and make progress and advances politically, economically and socially.

When I was appointed Resident of the First and Third Divisions, I travelled a lot, visiting the Malay villages on the coastal fringes, the Iban and Bidayuh longhouses and Chinese settlements. Whenever I found out that my SAOs and DOs did not make adequate rounds of visits, I reminded them of the need to increase the frequency of their visits to the people on the ground. I told them that they were the direct link between the people and the government. Otherwise, we would not know the problems the people faced. I would encourage officers who seldom go out to meet the people, especially in the rural areas, to emulate our practices in the past of making frequent field visits.

Being a Resident of the Third Division, I was also the Chairman of the Divisional

Security Committee. In August 1971, a 24-hour curfew was imposed on Sibu town and the surrounding areas. I travelled regularly to the rural areas to assess the situation and understand the difficulties faced by the people during the curfew. At one of the places I visited, a few people approached me in distress, complaining about the effect of the curfew. They were mainly farmers and livestock breeders, and the curfew curtailed their journeys to the big towns to sell their produce or to seek medical treatments. I took up the matter with the higher authorities at one of the Divisional Security Committee meetings attended by the then IGP, Tun Ismail and General Ibrahim, Chief of General Staff. At first, the IGP was reluctant to accede to the requests of the people, citing the reason that they could be punished for their support and collaboration with the communist insurgents. I pleaded with him that the more important issue was to win back the hearts and minds of the locals long after the threat was over. To come down hard on the people would only aggravate the situation and we could lose their support in the long run. General Ibrahim thought long and hard and finally managed to persuade the IGP to reduce the curfew hours from 24 gradually by 2 hours. Later, General Ibrahim gave me a pat on the back for speaking up to the IGP. To me, it was my duty and responsibility to the people in my Residency that mattered most.

On the night of 27th June 1965, a group of Indonesian soldiers came across the border from West Kalimantan, and together with members of the local Clandestine Communist Organisation (CCO), attacked the police station at Mile 18 Kuching-Serian Road. During the two-hour-long battle, two policemen, including the younger brother of the then Chief Minister, Datuk Stephen Kalong Ningkan, were killed and two were wounded. That night, the intruders also killed 6 civilians and wounded two, all Hakka Chinese. When reinforcements came from Kuching to repulse the attack, the infiltrators beat a hasty retreat to the border through Padawan Road. That night, another group of them caused a slight damage to the bridge at the 24th mile Kuching-Serian Road.

As a result of this incident, the State Government launched an exercise called Operation Hammer on 28th June. Under this operation, three controlled residential areas would be built to resettle Chinese families residing at the 15th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 21st and 24th miles. The objective was twofold: to provide protection for residents in the areas concerned and to eliminate the influence of the communist insurgents over the locals.

Immediate actions were taken by the Public Works Department, SESCO and other agencies to build new houses, install wire fences around the new

villages, and install electricity supply. All the necessary works were completed by 6th July 1965, and on that date, more than 8,000 people from 1,285 families were relocated to the three centres under curfew, namely Siburan Village at 17th Mile, Beratok Village at 19th Mile and Tapah Village at 21st Mile. These controlled areas were in the Kuching District of the First Division.

As a Resident, I was asked by the State Government to pay special attention to the administration of the three new villages. I had to pay frequent visits to these villages and hold discussions with the SAO in charge and the local community leaders. In the beginning, the villagers were unhappy living in the controlled areas. They had very limited freedom of movement and were subjected to regular security checks, etc. They often requested to return to their former homes or to visit their relatives outside the controlled areas. When peace was restored and the conditions normalised, they preferred to stay put because of the well-established bazaars, schools, health clinics, community halls and other amenities.

To counter security threats from the communist insurgents in the Sibu Division, a joint operational command called the Rajang Security Command or RASCOM was established on 25th March 1972. This was an independent command to be administered by the Chief Minister of Sarawak, who was the State Director of Operations. Under him, all civil, military and police authorities were unified under a single authority to streamline the administration, policing, and military activities in the Sibu Division. I was the first Chief Executive Officer of RASCOM.

One of the most effective and successful efforts in combating the communist insurgency was the Civic Action Group (CAG), introduced by General Ghazali Seth in September 1972. He saw the need for RASCOM to redress the adverse situation existing in the vast Special Command Area. The CAG was deployed as a follow-up team to all Security Forces operations or as part of a RASCOM operation in selected target areas.

In early January 1973, I left Sibu for Kuching to take up a new appointment as Chairman of the Committee to Review the Administrative Boundaries of the State of Sarawak (CRABS).

This task took me nearly two years to complete, travelling to all the divisions and outstations throughout the State. During my visits to those places together with three other members of the Committee, I held discussions with Residents, District Officers, Heads of Departments and community leaders to seek their views on the matter under review. At the end of 1974, the Committee

submitted its report to the State Government through the State Secretary with recommendations to (a) divide the existing five divisions into 11 divisions, i.e., the First Division into two; Second Division into two; Third Division into three, plus one coastal Division; Fourth Division into three; and (b) to increase development efforts to provide more and better infrastructure for linking up the various urban centres and rural areas, and to provide more public utilities and amenities at those places for the benefit of the people as a whole. The purpose of the exercise is to streamline the administration with a view to make it more effective and efficient.

On 6th November 1981, I left Kuching for Sibu to take up the appointment as the Executive Chairman of the Sibu Municipal Council. My seven-year-plus stint as the Mayor of Sibu from late 1981 till early 1988 was the most strenuous and challenging of my entire career in the civil service. Nevertheless, I had to perform my duties with patience and much tolerance. My personal belief and faith sustained me through all the challenges I faced in my long career in the civil service. One of the great abiding truths that I had deeply and vividly experienced in my long career in the government service is to always have faith in the Almighty.⁶

Dato Sri Yao Ping Hua (Deceased)

served in the following capacities as a civil servant:

- Administrative Officer , Kapit District Office and Sibu Resident's Office (1940 - 1946);
- Assistant Clerk of Councils (Council Negri) (1957);
- Resident, First and Third Divisions;
- Chief Executive Officer of RASCOM;
- Chairman, Committee to Review the Administrative Boundaries of the State of Sarawak.

Laying the Strong Foundation for a Heart of Service

This book provides a glimpse into the lives and experiences of various individuals who have contributed significantly to the transformation of the Sarawak civil service, Malaysia over the last 60 years. As these individuals shared their stories, it became evident that three names stand out as having had a profound impact on the civil service, particularly during their formative years. These individuals were the three former State Secretaries of the Sarawak civil service - the late **Tan Sri Datuk Gerunsin Lembat**, the late **Datuk Amar Haji Abang Yusuf Bin Abang Puteh**, and the late **Tan Sri Datuk Amar Haji Bujang Bin Mohamad Nor**.

These three former State Secretaries were instrumental in shaping the ethos and culture of the civil service in Sarawak. Their dedication to prioritising the needs and concerns of the people set a strong foundation for an organisation driven by a heart of service.

The legacy left behind by Tan Sri Datuk Gerunsin Lembang, Datuk Amar Haji Abang Yusuf Bin Abang Puteh, and Tan Sri Datuk Amar Haji Bujang Bin Mohamad Nor serves as an enduring example for all civil servants. They emphasised and modelled the importance of empathy, dedication, discipline and a commitment to serving the people. Their influence and the example that they showed have undoubtedly played a central role in shaping the ethos of the civil service in Sarawak.

It is unfortunate that this book is not able to include first-hand accounts from these three dedicated leaders of the SCS. However, through the stories and experiences of the civil servants who had the privilege and honour of learning from and, being guided and directed by them, it is clear that they provided a strong foundation of “service from the heart” that became the norm and culture within the SCS. They were the giants of servant leadership upon whose shoulders the leaders who came after them stood high and proud and remained strongly committed to the ethos of service that they modelled during their years of service in the SCS.



TAN SRI DATUK GERUNSIN LEMBANG

(State Secretary, 1966 - 1979)

The late Tan Sri Datuk Gerunsin Lembat has the distinction of being the first to serve as State Secretary for the Sarawak civil service shortly after the State became independent within Malaysia.

He was born on 15th March 1927 at Rumah Lembat, Nanga Mitas, Awik, Saratok. He started his public service career when he was recruited as a teacher during the second and third terms of his education at St. Augustine's School, Betong. His teaching career lasted until December 1941 due to the disruption brought by the Japanese occupation of Sarawak.

After the Japanese Occupation, he worked as an enumerator for the Census Department in 1946. A year later, he joined the Teachers' Training School at Springfield and Madrasah Melayu, which was the training school for teachers prior to the opening of the Batu Lintang Teachers College.

On 4th September 1948, he spent two (2) years as a Research Assistant in Iban Language at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. He was then offered a one-year course from 1951-1952 to study English at Regent Polytechnic, London.

Upon his return to Sarawak in September 1952, he joined the Sarawak Junior Administrative Officers' Training Course. After his training, he was assigned to the Information Department where he pioneered the provision of radio services in Sarawak throughout his stint with the Radio Sarawak Broadcasting Service.

The late Tan Sri Datuk Gerunsin was one of the Sarawak leaders who played a significant role in the process of Sarawak gaining independence from the United Kingdom, and subsequently the formation of Malaysia. In 1962, he was attached to the Solidarity Constitutive Committee and was a member of the Sarawak Delegation responsible for negotiating the rights of Sarawak in the Inter-Governmental Committee (IGC). Being fluent in both spoken and

written English, he interpreted for the Dayak representatives during the crucial discussions in the IGC. As such, he was both an observer to and participant in the negotiations resulting in the formation of the Federation of Malaysia.

In February - March 1963, he attended a course with the Australian Broadcasting Commission. In September 1963 - January 1964, he attended a course in broadcasting at BBC London. In September 1965, he attended a special course for Overseas Administrators (1965/1966 Session) at Oxford University. In August 1966, he was appointed as acting State Secretary and a month later, he became Sarawak's first State Secretary in September 1966.

As State Secretary, Tan Sri Gerunsin played a significant role in helping Sarawak navigate through the challenges faced by the newly independent nation. In his devotion to serving Sarawak as a civil servant, he turned down opportunities, such as the Eisenhower Fellowship offered to him in 1968, because of the unstable political conditions in Sarawak.

Indeed, his main contribution to Sarawak as the leader of the State's civil service was in the part he played in achieving and securing peace and political stability for Sarawak. He ably led, guided and inspired civil servants who had to confront threats to Sarawak's peace and order situation as a result of the Confrontation conflict with Indonesia and communist insurgency during the early years of Sarawak's independence.

Following Confrontation, he attended the Signing Ceremony of the Border Agreement at Jakarta as a member of the Malaysian Delegation. And with the late Tun Jugah and the Federal Secretary, he was one of the joint organisers of the Peace-Making Ceremony held at Long Jawe.

Another notable contribution of Tan Sri Gerunsim was in creating awareness and appreciation of the cultures in Malaysia and their contribution towards national integration. As an Iban statesman, he was a leading advocate for cultural heritage preservation in Sarawak. His advocacy in preserving and

sharing knowledge and understanding of the cultures and traditions of the different ethnic groups in Sarawak undoubtedly helped in building the spirit of unity and harmony in Sarawak.

He retired as State Secretary on 15th March 1979, and 8 years after his retirement (in August 1987), he was appointed Head of the *Majlis Adat Istiadat* Sarawak (MAIS). He passed away on 12th December 1995.



**DATUK AMAR HAJI ABANG YUSUF
BIN ABANG PUTEH**
(State Secretary, 1979 - 1984)

Born in Kalaka, Sarawak, on 7th July 1935, Datuk Amar Haji Abang Yusuf Bin Abang Puteh received his early education in a primary school in Betong and was able to complete his secondary education at the Batu Lintang Teachers College. He subsequently obtained further studies at the University of Malaya, at Cambridge (U.K.), and at Princeton (U.S.A.).

One of the early and significant contributions of Datuk Amar Haji Abang Yusuf Bin Abang Puteh to the Sarawak Civil Service (SCS) happened when he was appointed as the Establishment Officer to replace the outgoing colonial officer in 1965. As the person responsible for recruiting and staffing the organisation at that time, he made sure that Sarawakians who showed potential and merit as leaders were given an opportunity to enter the SCS workforce and once in, were sent for further studies overseas to give them the necessary knowledge, exposure and competencies to become prime movers of development in Sarawak upon their return to the State. They were selected regardless of ethnicity, religion and status in society, giving equal opportunity to all Sarawakians.

Most of the Sarawakians who became leaders of the Sarawak civil service, and some in the political arena, were among those whom Datuk Amar had personally selected to be sent for further education in the United Kingdom, United States, Canada and Australia in areas of expertise that they were then able to apply for Sarawak's development programs.

Datuk Amar Haji Abang Yusuf was driven by his belief in the power of education in building a more united country. Datuk Amar Haji Abang Yusuf's determination to promote understanding and appreciation of the diverse cultures in Malaysia stemmed from a traumatic experience he had during the racial riots in Kuala Lumpur in May 1969 that he personally witnessed. Seeing the horrors of the riots, he committed himself to fostering unity and harmony among Malaysians.

He played a key role in the establishment of *Yayasan Sarawak* (Sarawak Foundation), a foundation dedicated to providing educational opportunities

for Sarawakian children. *Yayasan Sarawak* was set up out of the need to give the children of Sarawak from poor families mainly in rural areas access to education. Hundreds of children from Sarawak's rural communities were given the means, such as allowances, school uniforms and textbooks, so that they could focus on their studies. Through the foundation, Sarawakian students were also sent to West Malaysia for further studies, exposing them to different cultural experiences and fostering a greater understanding of the wider Malaysian community. According to Datuk Amar Haji Abang Yusuf "They must be taken out of Sarawak to see the rest of Malaysia, not just Sarawak so that they will understand what it means to be a true Malaysian citizen". Additionally, *Yayasan Sarawak* also organised study trips for teachers from West Malaysia to familiarise themselves with Sarawak, further bridging the cultural divide between the two regions and helping the teachers assist and guide their Sarawakian students better.

During Datuk Amar Haji Abang Yusuf's term as State Secretary, he directed that Merdeka or Independence Day celebrations be held in every district in Sarawak to mark the formation of Malaysia. During this event, there would be activities such as sports matches, and *gotong royong* participated in by the staff from both the state and federal civil service agencies as well as the general public. These activities helped to instil a sense of patriotism and love for the country, and also promoted team spirit among Sarawak civil servants and their counterparts from other states in Malaysia serving under the Federal civil service.

As a leader in the SCS, Datuk Amar Haji Abang Yusuf exemplified what he termed "*Leadership by discipline*". He described the situation in the 1970s as a time when "*morale and discipline in the civil service were at their lowest, following a series of political turmoils and upheavals in the State. We also had to weed out active communist infiltration in the system. I put discipline as my premiere priority in the resuscitation programme. I had to work long hours, frequently away from my family travelling the length and breadth of the State to motivate, inspire and check on the Government officers at all levels.*"

Being a non-believer in delegation in its loose sense, I did it my way, from details to decisions during the early years. I am glad that I accomplished my mission to restore morale and discipline in the civil service”.

As State Secretary, Datuk Amar Haji Abang Yusuf detested what he called “remote-control leadership”. Leading by example, he exhorted civil servants to “reach out not only to the members of the Service but, equally important, the public all the way to the rural areas. Sedentary leadership in Kuching, particularly by those who are born, brought up and who live most of their lives in Kuching, may be adequate to handle routine files on administration. But the principal responsibilities of the civil service are more with the problems and expectations of the people on the ground. It is my experience that the only way to know the people well is to be with them on their home grounds. In my times as leader of the civil service, I visited all the substations in Sarawak, the only exception being Long Semadoh in Lawas. I travelled to the far interiors visiting long-houses and villages. I have the added advantage of knowing what poverty means, having been born into it. Reaching the people in the remote areas and also in the other centres of the State is the only way to administer the civil service effectively and with understanding. Remote-control administration may be good for London or Washington but not for Sarawak”.

Datuk Amar Haji Abang Yusuf also discouraged what he called “Pass-the-buck leadership”. He stressed that “a leader cannot delegate any authority without properly understanding the issues and what is involved in the delegation. To me delegation in that form is a device to avoid responsibilities arising from laziness and incompetence. Mistakes done in the process are blamed on the officers concerned while the leader washes his hands free. I call such leadership makan gaji buta or eating blind wage”.



**TAN SRI DATUK AMAR HAJI BUJANG
BIN MOHAMAD NOR**
(State Secretary, 1984 - 1992)

Tan Sri Datuk Amar Haji Bujang Bin Mohamad Nor studied at St. Joseph School in Kuching and then continued his tertiary studies at the University of Malaya in 1949 where he obtained a Bachelor of Arts (Honours).

He started his career in the Sarawak Administrative Service as a District Officer in Lawas in 1962, and in Sarikei and Bintangor District in 1965. He was also a First Class Magistrate in Lawas in 1965, Chief Assistant Secretary at the Ministry of Natural Resources until 1965 and was appointed three (3) times acting Permanent Secretary of the Ministry to replace a British Expatriate Officer at that time.

He was sent to take a course in the field of National Development at The Hague, Netherlands under the Colombo Plan Fellowship Award program. He was appointed as Sarawak State Deputy Financial Secretary upon his return from the Netherlands in 1967 before assuming the position of Sarawak State Financial Secretary from 1971 to 1984.

He was appointed as Sarawak State Secretary in 1984 until 1992. This was at a time when the Sarawak government was intensifying its efforts to attain development in all spheres. He led his team of civil servants on fact-finding trips throughout Sarawak to identify and assess the development potentials of the different Divisions in Sarawak.

As State Secretary, Tan Sri Bujang stressed the importance of civil servants ***“getting to the ground to reach out to the people”***. He led by example, making it a priority of his administration to make the government machinery as open and as accessible to the ordinary folks, whether they be in far-flung villages or longhouses or in major towns. With all the development initiatives

that the government was introducing, and which were naturally strange and unfamiliar to the people, Tan Sri Bujang realized that the civil service must conduct an effective communications campaign and public relations exercise to generate the people's support and acceptance of these development programmes.

One way he did this was to insist that government officials must get down to the ground, and present a ***“friendly and compassionate face of the government”*** to the people. It was a common practice during this time for civil servants to get right down to the ground – trekking for miles on rugged roads and knee-deep muddy swamps or pushing up their boats across raging rapids – just to reach the people and explain to them what development means, and how it would benefit their lives.

Tan Sri Bujang disdained from holding meetings in the comfort of air-conditioned rooms. Instead, he was known to site meetings of his heads of departments and residents in out-station areas. *“The only way for civil servants to fully understand the issues and peoples’ concerns about development is to see it on the ground,”* Tan Sri Bujang said. And so, he directed that Residents and Heads of Departments meetings must not always be held in Kuching. He also insisted that all the heads of departments must attend these meetings themselves, and that if they were to send in a representative, these people would have the authority to make decisions, for their departments. It was Tan Sri Bujang's way of ensuring that decisions addressing issues and problems on the ground were made quickly and efficiently. These meetings done on the ground also enhanced support and teamwork among the officers involved as well as instilled an appreciation of the unique environment, potentials and assets of the respective areas where they serve.

Discipline was also a cornerstone of the civil service machinery during this time. As Tan Sri Bujang explained, *“the peoples’ heart and minds cannot be won over if there are civil servants who will exploit and take advantage of their positions. It is thus imperative that all civil servants must observe the highest standards of integrity and discipline in their conduct”*.

Part 3

The Changes We Now Can See and Experience in Sarawak

Over the last 60 years of Sarawak's independence within the Federation of Malaysia, civil servants from both the Federal and State civil service have played a crucial role in shaping and developing the State. Their dedication, commitment, and hard work have contributed significantly to the progress and transformation of Sarawak. The changes that we can see throughout Sarawak today, in terms of its physical infrastructure, social well-being, and economic development, are a testament to the efforts of these civil servants. Through their tireless efforts and unwavering commitment to public service, they have helped to improve the lives of the people of Sarawak and create a better future for the State.

Reflecting on their experiences and reminiscing about the challenges they have faced, some of these civil servants have shared their stories and insights, providing a glimpse into the



Kuching Municipal Council building

Government Buildings and Facilities

In the present day, civil servants in Sarawak are reaping the benefits of working in modern and comfortable workplaces. The government has made significant efforts to upgrade and retrofit existing buildings, as well as construct new ones, to provide a conducive and efficient working environment for all civil servants.

One notable example is the Wisma Bapa Malaysia in Kuching City, which serves as the Secretariat. This building has been upgraded and retrofitted with modern conveniences and digitalized facilities



Information Department, Kuching



Kuching Police Station



Wisma Bapa Malaysia, 1976



Long Lama District office, Baram



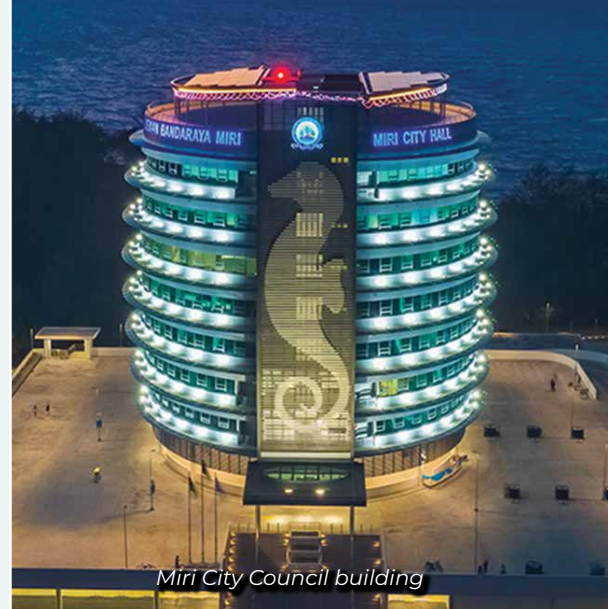
District Office



Sadong Jaya District office, Samarahan

to meet the demands and needs of a digitalized civil service organization. The aim is to enhance efficiency and service delivery, as well as to provide a comfortable and modern working environment for civil servants.

Additionally, other government buildings housing different ministries have also been constructed with the intention of ensuring a comfortable working environment for civil servants. These modern workplaces are equipped with state-of-the-art facilities, digitalized systems, and modern conveniences to support the needs of the civil service staff as well as their clientele.



Miri City Council building



Wisma Bapa Malaysia present day



Sibu District Office building



Baitul Makmur, Petra Jaya



Wisma Sumber Alam



Wisma Pelita



Menara Sarawak Energy



Menara Pehin Setia Raja, Mukah

Outside Kuching, civil servants now have access to state-of-the-art facilities and equipment that enhance their efficiency and service delivery with the establishment of Divisional headquarters in each Division. These headquarters, which house the Resident and District Offices, have become iconic landmarks in their respective Divisions, incorporating architectural elements that symbolize the unique strengths of each place.



Kapit State Office Complex



Sarawak State Government Office Complex, Betong

The inclusion of symbolic architectural elements in these Divisional headquarters serves to both showcase the cultural and historical significance of each division, as well as to create a sense of identity and pride among the civil servants working there and the people who make use of the services provided by these government entities.



Artist's impression of Limbang Integrated Administrative Centre



Artist's impression of Sarikei Integrated Administrative Centre



Sarawak Government Administrative Centre, Serian

Overall, the efforts to provide modern and comfortable workplaces for civil servants in Sarawak are a testament to the government's commitment to enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the civil service, as well as to improve the overall well-being of civil servants. These efforts are essential in ensuring that civil servants can perform their duties to the best of their abilities and continue to serve the people of Sarawak effectively.

The modern amenities and conveniences available in these buildings have significantly improved the working environment for civil servants. With access to advanced technology, efficient communication systems, and well-equipped office spaces, civil servants are able to carry out their responsibilities with greater ease and productivity. Overall, the modernization of workplace environments for civil servants in Sarawak has contributed to a more conducive and productive working atmosphere, ultimately benefiting both the employees and the communities they serve.





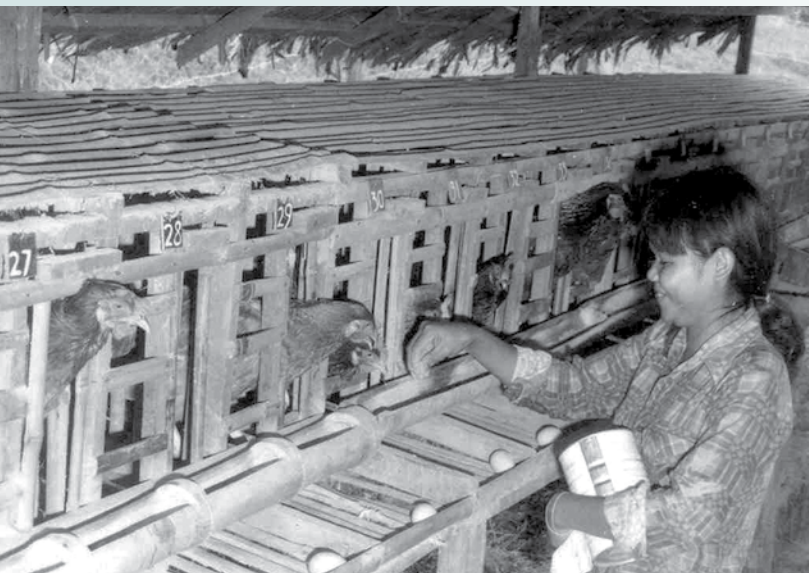




Agricultural Landscape in Sarawak

Intentional efforts by the Sarawak government to focus on Native Customary Rights (NCR) lands have led to significant changes in the agricultural sector.

This shift was a sensitive and controversial move that required the patience, dedication, and commitment of Sarawak civil servants to convince and rally



Sixty years ago, Sarawak's agricultural landscape was markedly different from what it is today. Characterized by shifting cultivation and small-scale farming and fishing, there were vast tracts of land with potential for commercial agriculture that remained largely untapped.

the people to accept these changes. Their hard work has paid off as the changes in Sarawak's agricultural landscape are clear to see.

The success story of Sarawak in transforming its NCR lands to become commercially viable for the native landowners serves as a model for other regions looking to leverage native rights for commercial agricultural development.

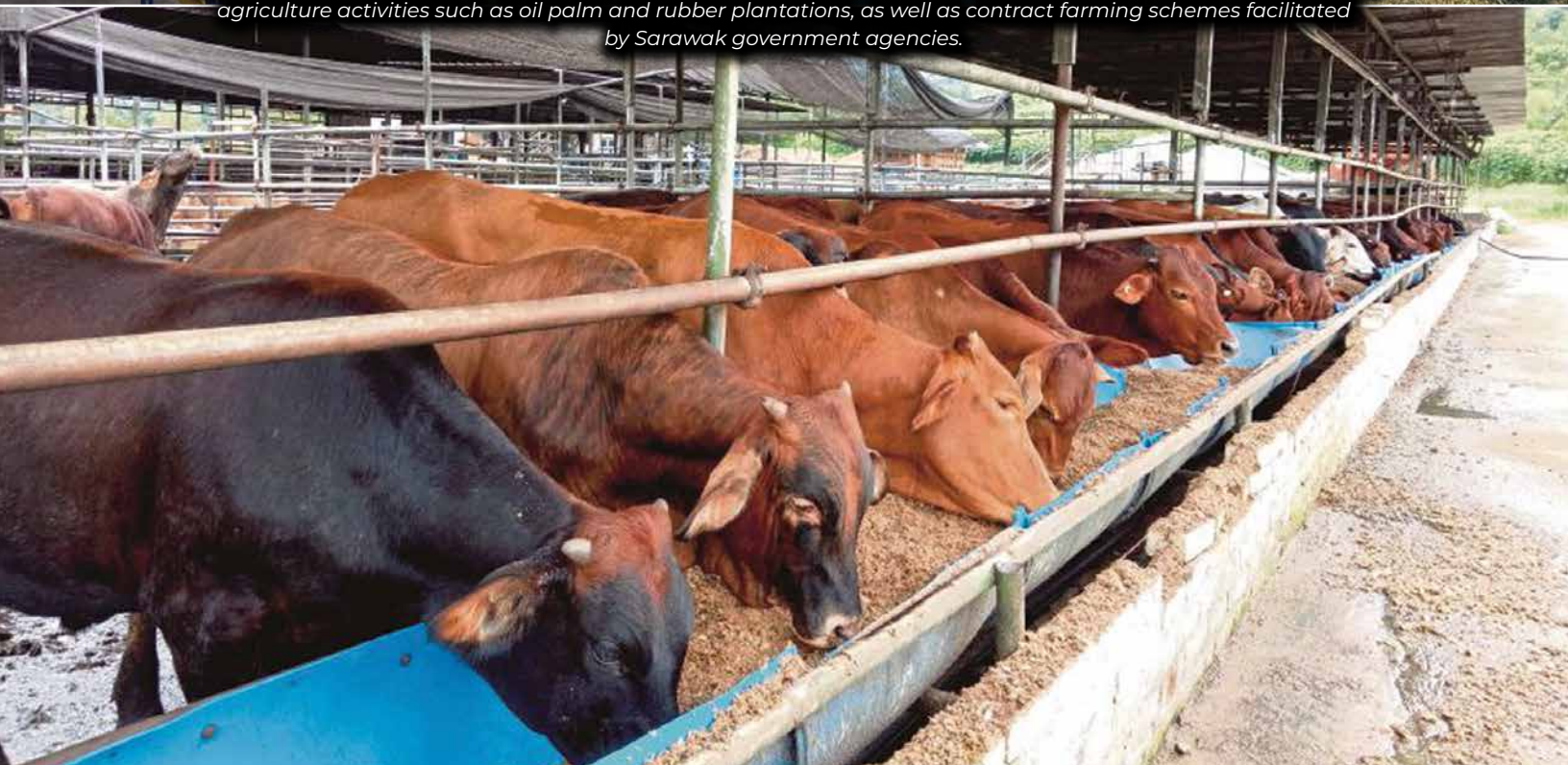


The transformation of Sarawak's agricultural sector is a testament to the successful collaboration between the government and the local communities. This shift has not only improved the economic prospects of the native landowners but has also contributed to the overall development of the State.





Today, shifting cultivation activities have dwindled, and native landowners are reaping the benefits of commercial agriculture activities such as oil palm and rubber plantations, as well as contract farming schemes facilitated by Sarawak government agencies.





Health Services

Over the past six decades, the state of Sarawak has experienced significant improvements in its health and medical services. What was once a challenging landscape for accessing healthcare, particularly in remote areas and highlands, has now become more accessible to the local population. The government has made great strides in establishing a network of medical facilities, including hospitals and clinics, to cater to the healthcare needs of the people.

Today, each division in Sarawak is equipped with its own government hospital, providing comprehensive medical care to the residents in the area. Additionally, most districts also have their own government clinics, ensuring that even those living in far-flung areas have access to basic healthcare services. This development has played a crucial role in bringing down the barriers to healthcare and improving the overall health outcomes for the people of Sarawak.

The State's commitment to strengthening its healthcare infrastructure and accessibility has undoubtedly led to significant advancements in public health. These efforts have led to a more equitable distribution of medical services, making it possible for residents to receive the care they need. As a result, the overall health and well-being of the people of Sarawak have been greatly enhanced.



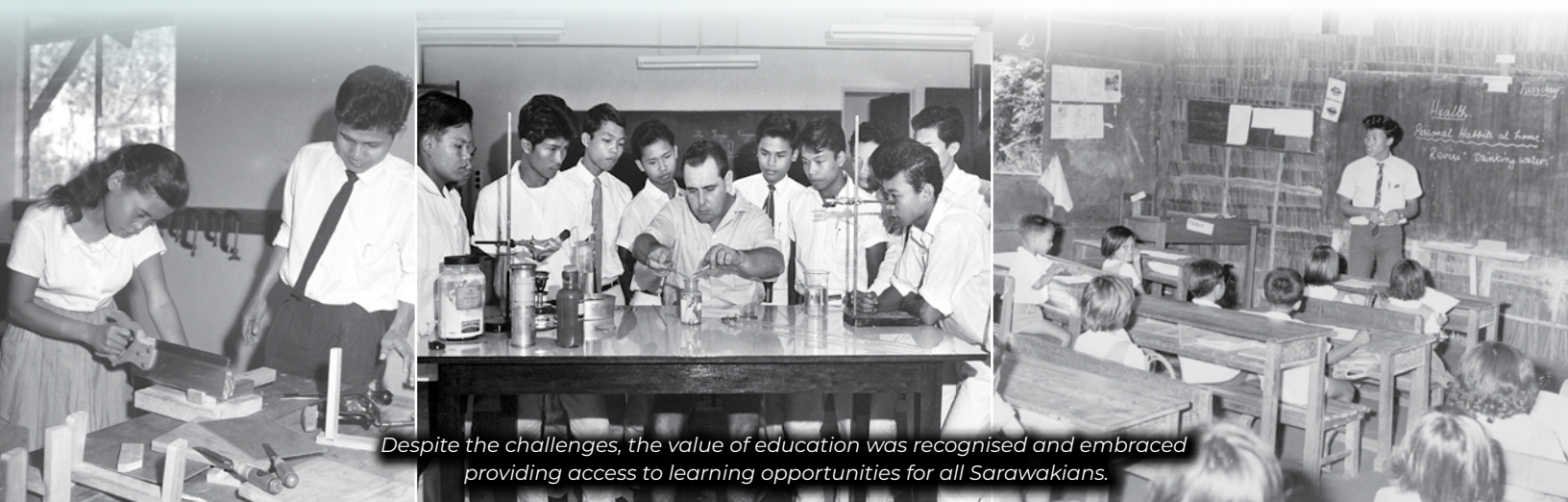


Sarawak General Hospital

Education

Education has undoubtedly played a pivotal role in the development of Sarawak, particularly in the early years of its independence within Malaysia. In those early days, Sarawak civil servants had to work tirelessly to persuade parents in longhouse communities and other rural areas to send their children to school. This often required parents to make significant sacrifices, with young children being sent away to boarding schools located far from their communities.

Consequently, today, education is highly accessible to the people of Sarawak, with the government demonstrating a strong dedication to ensuring that



Despite the challenges, the value of education was recognised and embraced providing access to learning opportunities for all Sarawakians.



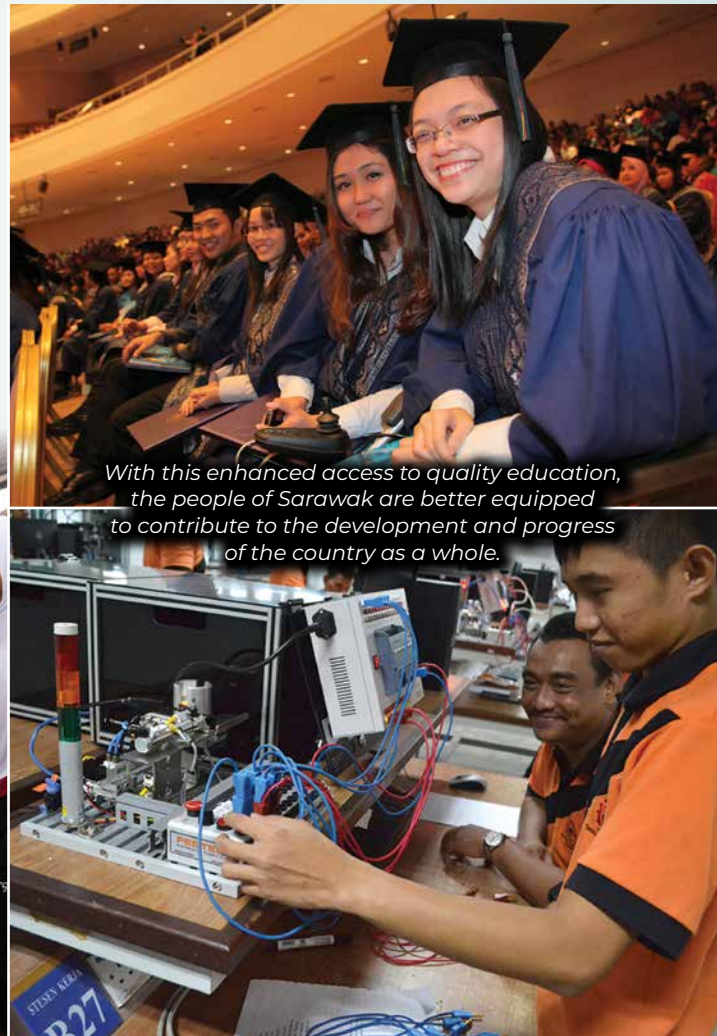
As a result, the landscape of education in Sarawak has been transformed, offering a wide array of choices and opportunities for individuals to pursue their educational aspirations.

educational facilities and services are readily available throughout the State.

It is evident that education has played a crucial role in shaping the trajectory of Sarawak's development, and the government's commitment to ensuring accessible and high-quality education for all underscores its importance in the continued growth and prosperity of the region.



The Sarawak government places considerable emphasis on the importance and strengthening of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education to produce the much-needed talents to support the State's development initiatives.



With this enhanced access to quality education, the people of Sarawak are better equipped to contribute to the development and progress of the country as a whole.





Physical and Digital Infrastructure

The development of an extensive network of roads and bridges is critical for the progress and advancement of any community, especially in a diverse and vast region like Sarawak. Without adequate infrastructure, Sarawakians would face significant challenges in accessing opportunities to improve their lives. The ability to access education, healthcare, employment, and other essential services would be severely limited, resulting in a significant barrier to individual and community development.

Over the past 60 years, civil servants serving in Sarawak have undoubtedly encountered the arduous task of navigating the rugged terrain and inhospitable conditions in order to fulfill their duties. The lack of infrastructure not only presented logistical challenges but also posed significant risks to personal safety. However, with the improved transportation network and telecommunications services, the ability to reach and serve remote communities has been greatly enhanced.

Furthermore, the development of digital infrastructure is playing a pivotal role in ensuring that all Sarawakians have access to the opportunities presented by the digital economy. Bridging the digital divide is essential in enabling all individuals to participate in the modern economy and take advantage of the benefits of digitalization.



Infrastructure development throughout the length and breadth of Sarawak is a development priority of the Sarawak government, and the relevant Sarawak and Federal government agencies are tasked to ensuring the timely completion of all physical infrastructure and utilities projects such as roads, bridges, airports, telecommunication and digital, electricity and water facilities.

In essence, the development of roads, bridges, and digital infrastructure in Sarawak is instrumental in providing the necessary connectivity for individuals to access essential services, educational opportunities, and economic prospects. It is crucial for the continued growth and progress of the State, and the commitment to further infrastructure development, be it physical or digital, is paramount in ensuring that all Sarawakians can thrive and prosper.







The Sarawak government endeavours to provide all Sarawakians access to mastering knowledge and skills in the new economy to realize Sarawak's aspirations to be a developed nation by 2030. The SCS implements government programmes and projects towards this end, which includes among others setting up facilities such as International Schools under Yayasan Sarawak, Sarawak Science Center, STEM Labs in schools, Digital Hubs and Digital Community Centres.

PEACE and HARMONY

The Sarawak Civil Service (SCS), its institutions, and personnel play a vital role in attaining and preserving the peace and harmony that the people of Sarawak are privileged to enjoy today. The SCS was established in the early years of Sarawak's independence within Malaysia, and its civil servants have faced numerous struggles and challenges to ensure peace and stability in the region.

Through their dedication and commitment, the Sarawak civil servants have created a safe and secure environment for the people. They adhere to existing laws and regulations, set the example for citizens to follow, and craft policies that promote the collective good of society. Their work is guided by a sense of empathy, understanding how their decisions impact the lives of their fellow Sarawakians.

Over the last 60 years, the SCS designed and implemented programs and projects that were aimed at fostering harmony among the multi-



Menara Panggau Dayak



Wisma FORUM



UNIFOR Complex (artist's impression)

ethnic population of Sarawak. These include formulating policies, rules and regulations that promote respect, tolerance and appreciation for the respective cultures, traditions and heritage of Sarawak's multi-racial population.

The SCS, following directions from the political leaders of the State, have built facilities that are designed to facilitate or encourage the people to gather and connect with each other. These include the Civic Centres in each of the divisions in Sarawak, the various places of worships and headquarters for the different ethnic groups.

As well, the SCS worked together with the communities of Sarawak, in organising different ethnic festivals and celebrations to encourage the people to share the best of their respective cultures, food, handicrafts and other facets of their traditions and heritage.

Preserving and strengthening the peace and harmony in Sarawak is the main motivation and inspiration that each and every civil servant is encouraged to bring into his job, no matter their designated functions. In the decision-making process, their one main motto is "an honour to serve" regardless of the race, ethnicity, religion creed, political background or affiliations of the people that they serve. By being faithful to this creed that guides their decisions and actions, they help strengthen the culture of respect, and harmony among the people of Sarawak.

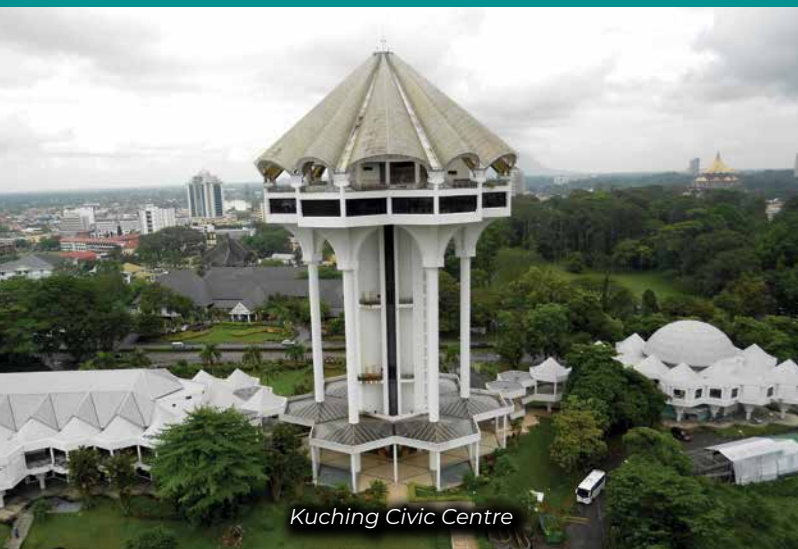


Civic Centres

Each division in Sarawak have their own Civic Centres (Dewan Suarah) which were built for the people to gather and interact with each other through activities such as ethnic festivals or open houses, seminars, fora and symposiums, and even social events such as weddings, talent competitions or sports events.



Mukah Civic Centre



Kuching Civic Centre



Limbang Civic Centre



Miri Civic Centre



Kapit Civic Centre



Samarahan Civic Centre



Bintulu Civic Centre



Sarikei Civic Centre



Bau Civic Centre



Sibu Civic Centre



Sri Aman Civic Centre

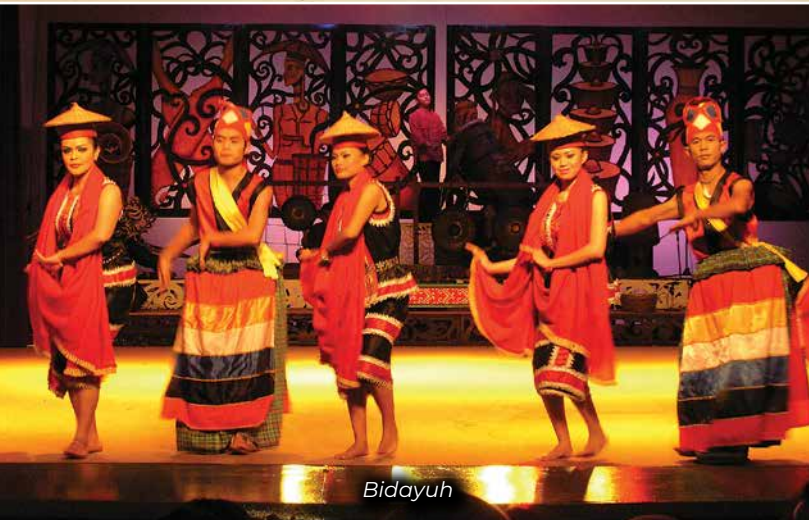
Religious Buildings





Sarawak's Multi-Ethnic Communities





End Notes

(1) Brooke and Colonial administrative service

During the rule of the First Rajah of Sarawak, government administration service was minimal. He followed a protective governmental policy under what became known as his Native Administrative Service. When James Brooke became Rajah of the small state of Sarawak in 1841, he was faced with similar problems confronting other European colonialists. His challenge was how to rule a tropical dependency with the scarce resources available to him. His predicament was worsened by the fact that Sarawak did not have the financial backing of a major European power.

Constrained by these circumstances, Rajah James initiated a system of government administration adapting native political structures. He ruled by adapting to the native structure of government as he was not in favour of completely displacing the indigenous elite. The principles which guided Brooke in administering the residents of Sarawak were that native customs should be respected, but modifications were encouraged should these run contrary to the British sense of justice.

The presence of European officials, though few, was central to Brooke's administration. The primary reason for posting a European officer in the interior was to keep peace and order by curbing unauthorised headhunting and preventing raids on coastal settlements.

The first Rajah allowed the participation of natives in government. The Supreme Council, which acted as a forum for the discussion of government affairs between Rajah Charles, his officers and the Malay *Datu* or native leaders, was created in 1855 as a forum to secure native support.

Sarawak was administratively divided into divisions and districts, and there was a practical partitioning of the country into Residencies. These Residencies referred to the more important districts that were usually placed under the charge of a European officer.

In 1882, the following were listed as Residencies; the Kuching Residency with its headquarters at Kuching; the Upper Sarawak Residency with its headquarters at Paku; the Lundu and Sematan Residency with its headquarters at Lundu; the Sadong, Batang Lupar and Saribas Residency with its headquarters at Simanggang; the Kalaka Residency with its headquarters at Fort Charles, Kabong; the Rejang Residency with its headquarters at Sibui; the Mukah and Oya Residency with its headquarters at Mukah and the Bintulu Residency with its headquarters at Bintulu.

The Divisional Resident was assisted by the second-class Resident and Assistant Resident. These middle-ranking officers were the equivalent of District Officers. The Residents were assisted at the lower level of administration by junior local officers known as Native Officers. The Native Officers were normally recommended for their posts by the Residents, who referred them to the Rajah, and it was left to the Rajah's discretion whether to employ them.

Native Officers not only served as advisers to European officers but also participated in the many expeditions against rebel tribes. They received regular salaries and were often directed to take sole charge of important border posts such as Lubok Antu in the Second Division. Native Officers were expected to acquaint themselves with the local customary law of the various communities living in their assigned districts and were given magisterial powers to enable them to arbitrate minor disputes.

Rajah James Brooke's successors, Rajah Charles Brooke and Rajah Vyner Brooke followed this system of administration that had been started by the First Rajah.

(2) Sarawak's Council Negri

The Council Negri, was established in 1867 initially known as the General Council. This body consisted of the Rajah, the senior European and Native Officers and traditional native chiefs.

Excluding Rajah Charles Brooke as President, the General Council comprised five (5) British Officers and 16 Muslim Malay and Melanau local community leaders to assist in the administration of the territories under the reign of Rajah Brooke.

According to Rajah Charles, the Council Negri was formed to consolidate the Government by giving the native chiefs more than local interest in the affairs of the state and to impress them with a sense of responsibility.

In 1903, in tandem with the change of time, the General Council meeting began its transition into a meeting known as the Council Negri.

In 1941, a new written constitution was enacted, whereupon members of the Council Negri were increased to 25, consisting of official and unofficial members appointed by the Rajah in Council.

In 1946, Sarawak witnessed the convention of the Council Negri to end the reign of the White Rajah's Family in Sarawak and the surrender of Sarawak to the British Colonies.

In 1956, the membership of the Council Negri increased to 45 members comprising 14 Ex-officio members, 24 elected members, four (4) nominated members and three (3) Standing members.

In 1968, the Council Negri membership increased to 48 members to represent their respective constituencies (one representative per constituency).

The name Council Negri was changed to Sarawak State Legislative Assembly or Dewan Undangan Negeri Sarawak (DUNS) in 1976.

Its membership was expanded in 1985 to 56 democratically elected members by the people from the 56 constituencies.

The DUNS membership subsequently increased to 62 and 71 members in the year 1996 and 2006 respectively.

The latest delineation of the constituencies was done in 2016 which resulted in DUNS increasing their membership to 82 elected members.

(3) Formation of the Malaysian Federation

Malaya's first Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj broached the Malaysia Concept on 27th May 1961 in Singapore.

In his speech to the Foreign Correspondents' Association, Tunku formally expressed his wish for a closer association between Malaya and the British protectorates of Singapore, Brunei, North Borneo (Sabah) and Sarawak.

On 16th September 1963, Sarawak joined the Malayan states, Sabah and Singapore, forming Malaysia.

The idea of a new federation of Malaysia as proposed by Tunku Abdul Rahman was accepted without much qualms by the British government.

With the concurrence of the Malayan government, they set up a commission – the Cobbold Commission – to ascertain the wishes of the people of Sabah and Sarawak to join the proposed federation. After reviewing the Cobbold Commission's findings, the British government appointed the Lansdowne Commission to draft a constitution for the Malaysia Federation.

Following the Cobbold Commission Report, a joint statement was issued on 1st Aug 1962 by the British and Malayan governments expressing an intention to conclude a formal agreement for the formation of Malaysia which would provide for safeguards for the special interests of North Borneo (Sabah) and Sarawak, and these safeguards would cover such matters as religious freedom, education, representation in the Federal Parliament, the position of the indigenous races, control over immigration, citizenship and the state constitutions.

The Joint Press Statement also announced the formation of an Inter-Governmental Committee (IGC), which would have representatives from the two Borneo states to work out these 'special safeguards'.

The IGC drew up the safeguards for the special interests of Sabah and Sarawak and they formed the bases of the Malaysia Agreement.

These safeguards, which included, inter alia, complete control over the two states' natural resources like, land, forests, minerals both onshore and off-shore, local government, immigration, usage of the English language in judicial proceedings etc., state ports and more sources of revenues being assigned to the Borneo states, were eventually incorporated or embedded in the Federal Constitution and also into crucial legislation like the Immigration Act, 1963 which was passed and came into force on Malaysia Day.

On 9th July 1963 the Malaysia Agreement between Great Britain, the Federation of Malaya, Singapore, North Borneo (Sabah) and Sarawak was signed in London. The agreement also includes the terms of Singapore's entry into Malaysia.

In this agreement, there are as many as 11 Articles which are followed by the appendices which form the basis of Act 26/1963 to amend the existing constitution which is the Federal Constitution of Malaya to the Federal Constitution of Malaysia, in line with the merger of North Borneo (Sabah), Sarawak and Singapore. Each of

the articles contained in this agreement serves as a matter and direction that must be followed, obeyed and fulfilled by all parties who have signed this agreement.

The essence of this agreement:

- Article 1: Declares that North Borneo, Sarawak, and Singapore will be associated with the Federation of Malaya and known as the State of Sabah, the State of Sarawak and the State of Singapore in accordance with the Constitutional instrument attached to the letter of agreement naming the Federation with the name "Malaysia";
- Article 2: State the obligation of the Federal Government of Malaya to enact the Constitution through the Federal Parliament by ensuring that the attached Constitutional instrument will be an Act to be complied with in the drafted Constitution and will come into force on 31st August 1963 and this date will be known as "Malaysia Day" (this date was later changed to 16th September 1963 due to several reasons).
- Article 3: Stating the responsibility of the United Kingdom Government to hand over to the Queen, orders to enable the Constitution of the states of Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore to come into force in accordance with the annexes to the constitutions of each of those states which are attached together with the letter of agreement.
- Article 4: Declares the obligation of the United Kingdom Government to obtain the enactment of an Act in the Parliament of the United Kingdom to enable the cession of sovereign rights by the Queen over North Borneo, Sarawak and Singapore, commencing on "Malaysia Day" and handing over that authority in accordance with the Agreement and its annexes .
- Article 5: Stating the obligation of the Federal Government of Malaya to obtain the enactment of an Act by Parliament to amend the scope of immigration for entry into Sabah and Sarawak as well as special provisions such as certain attachments attached to this Agreement will be subject to the enactment of the Act.
- Article 6: Declares that the Foreign Defense and Mutual Assistance Agreement between the Federation of Malaya and the United Kingdom in 1957, will now be extended to all "Malaysian" territories as well as permission for the United Kingdom to continue using existing military bases, especially in Singapore, as in the appendix in this Agreement.
- Article 7: Expressing the agreement to enable the Queen to issue an order regarding the payment of consolation to civil service officers serving, especially in North Borneo and Sarawak before Malaysia Day. In addition, it also touches on the Civil Servant Agreement that should be signed by the United Kingdom Government and the Malaysian Government. The Malaysian Government must also obtain approval from the Government of Sabah, Sarawak or Singapore before signing the agreement.

- Article 8: States the responsibility of the Federal Government of Malaya, North Borneo and Sarawak to take action to implement all recommendations, guarantees and undertakings contained in Chapter III and Appendix A and Appendix B of the Intergovernmental Committee Report signed on 27th February 1963 as long as where it is not stated in the Federal Constitution.
- Article 9: Stating the need to make Annex J which deals with the Common Market and the financial arrangements in this agreement become an Agreement between the Government of the Federation of Malaya and the Government of Singapore.
- Article 10: Stating the requirements of the Federal Government of Malaya and the Government of Singapore in exercising the existing powers regarding radio and television broadcasting as stated in Appendix K in this Agreement as long as it is not implemented through the Malaysian Constitution.
- Article 11: Stating this Agreement needs to be signed in English and Malay only while each annex is only in English. In case of confusion, then the English version will be used as the legal interpretation.

On 9th August 1965, Singapore separated from Malaysia to become an independent and sovereign state. The separation was the result of deep political and economic differences between the ruling parties of Singapore and Malaysia.

(4) Pioneers was written by Robert Nicholl. Published in **Sarawak Gazette** issue, Vol. LXXXIX, No. 1266, dated 31st August 1963.

Sarawak Gazette

The Government Printing Office was established in 1870 and one of its first publications was 'The Sarawak Gazette', a pet project by Rajah Charles Brooke. It was intended to promulgate the Rajah's orders and outstation officers.

It is unique among government publications as it is free to tackle a wide range of issues and has never been subjected to strict regulation from the government.

It contains source material on economic history, coastal trade returns, commodity prices, agricultural information, mineral and oil production statistics, anthropology, and archaeology.

Its first issue, dated 26th August 1870, was a three-page leaflet featuring a summary of Reuters' telegrams on the Franco-Prussian War.

(5) Rukun Negara

The Rukun Negara was declared on 31st August 1970. It was introduced following the May 13 incident in 1969 which weakened unity among the races in Malaysia. It was formed with the main purpose of forming a strong unity. The principles contained clearly the key to harmony and unity for the sake of the success and stability of the country.

The Rukun Negara

We, the people of Malaysia, pledge to concentrate our energy and efforts to achieve these ambitions based on the following principles:

- Belief in God
 - Loyalty to the King and Country
 - Supremacy of the Constitution
 - Rules of Law
 - Courtesy and Morality
-

(6) NOTE

The write-ups on Part 2 of this book are presented in the 1st person while it was actually written by a third party writer. The 1st person POV was adopted to indicate that these were actual firsthand accounts shared with the editorial team during the interviews conducted.

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