

“The Power of 3 in Sarawak’s Second Wave of Development”

(RAKAN Sarawak’s series of interviews with the
STATE SECRETARY



shift from an “administration to a more development management” orientation within the civil service, we started to educate our civil servants to think of the private sector as our “partners” in development. So much so that 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 nation.

RS RAKAN Sarawak : During the recently-held Sarawak International Quality Congress, our Chief Minister, YAB Pehin Sri Hj Abdul Taib Mahmud,, said that “trying to encourage the development of the business community, at the same time the civil community - is the function of the public sector. We have to make sure that we (the civil service) can interact with both wings of this major development efforts in our society, so that we can have, what I call the continuous improvement of the systems within our country, that we can call quality management.” In what ways is the Sarawak civil service fulfilling this function?

STATE SECRETARY : We, in the Sarawak civil service, have always been guided by YAB Pehin Sri’s exhortation for us all to set an example of a professional, effective, and compassionate organization.

I recall him telling us then 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.”

Early in the 90’s, when we began the

RS RAKAN Sarawak : How would you describe the relationship between the civil service and the private sector here in Sarawak?

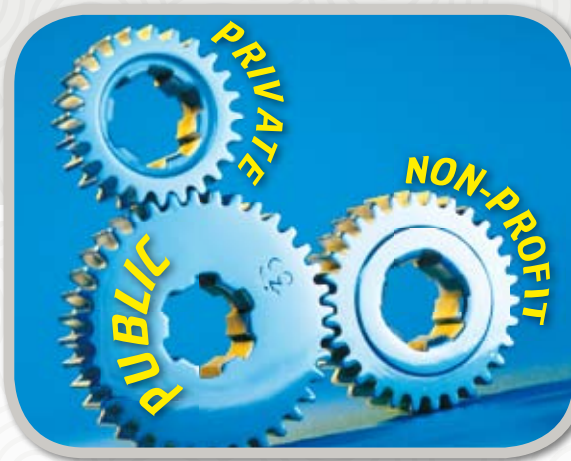
STATE SECRETARY : We have a symbiotic relationship with the private sector here in Sarawak. Among us in the civil service, we recognize the important role that the private sector plays in our country’s progress and development. In the same token, the private sector understands the public sector’s role 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.

And as we enter the Second Wave of

Development here in Sarawak, this symbiotic relationship between the public and private sectors becomes even more crucial. In this context, the private sector is seen as an important catalyst and engine of growth while the government, through its various ministries, agencies and departments, will be the facilitator. Only with effective coordination and collaboration between the private and public sectors can Sarawak become more competitive in this globalised world that demands speed, timeliness, cost efficiency, and value-added services.

We have proven that this partnership works, as evidenced by the level of growth that we have achieved in Sarawak over the last two decades. And we are even more excited with the possibilities presented to us in our State's second wave of development. We will see an even stronger public-private sector partnership as we pursue our development targets within the Sarawak's Regional Corridor Development framework. With this huge growth centre that stretches from Tanjung Manis to Similajau in Bintulu, we will see an excellent example of a mutually interdependent partnership between the public and private sectors jointly engaged in a development project of such a massive scale.

RAKAN Sarawak : The Chief Minister mentioned that encouraging the development of civic society organizations is also one of the most important functions of the public sector. How would you describe the current working relationship between the civil service and the civil community?



STATE SECRETARY : Back in the early 80's, a group of us, civil servants and also some members of the media, met to discuss the idea of setting up a civic organization that will complement the roles of the public and private sectors in bringing about development in Sarawak. We recognized that these civic organizations, such as community or grassroots organizations, sports associations, clan or ethnic-based associations, religious groups, business chambers or associations, etc – all play an important role in our society. That meeting gave birth to an NGO, which YAB Pehin Sri himself named Angkatan Zaman Mansang (AZAM), which means "Movement for Progress". Now in its 25th year of existence, AZAM is a clear demonstration of how we, in the government sector, values the contributions of the civil community in achieving the development goals of Sarawak.

We know that we cannot do the task of developing Sarawak alone. We must always work in concert with the private sector and the civic society organizations. Our main role is to encourage and support the growth of associations and organizations that will help us address social issues and concerns. At the same time, we also take pains to ensure that our systems and

processes enhance, rather than hinder, the efficient functioning and operations of business operations.

RAKAN Sarawak : In what ways does the government support the growth of civic society organizations here in Sarawak?

STATE SECRETARY : It has always been one of our development priorities to provide well-equipped civic centres in our cities, towns and even in some of our sub-districts, where the people can gather to conduct meetings and engage in activities that can help bring them closer together.

We also encourage our civil servants to get actively involved in social organizations such as sporting clubs, community arts groups, environmental groups, welfare groups and family support groups.

Our civil servants, who understand and live by the tenets of service to humanity in their day-to-day work, will always be an asset in any volunteer group or organization that they choose to get involved in.

Voluntary associations, nonprofit groups, nongovernmental organizations, bring people together and give them a sense of connectedness and mutual concern. Strong, active and dynamic organizations and societies inevitably help their own members to progress, especially when they run more meaningful activities like knowledge enhancement or enrichment or entrepreneurial business activities for their members.

Personally, I like to look upon this tri-sector partnership – among the public, private and non-profit sectors – as the power and magic of three's. Two has symmetry and symbiosis, but with three sectors working closely together for Sarawak's development, we can have an even greater dynamism and energy in whatever we set out to do or accomplish.