

“We Must Exemplify What Integrity is All About”

(RAKAN Sarawak's series of interviews with the State Secretary on "Defining Public Service Delivery")

RAKAN Sarawak:

How would you define integrity?

YB DATU WILSON BAYA DANDOT (STATE SECRETARY): Most people associate the idea of integrity with prevention of corruption only. This is one misconception that we need to clarify. It is true that corruption, which is the dishonest exploitation of power for personal gain, is an act that can be committed by a person without integrity. But our government's drive to inculcate and enhance integrity goes beyond eradicating graft and corruption in the country. It goes right to the core of where integrity begins- which is in the heart and soul of every individual.

I would define integrity then as referring to the quality of a person's character. For example, if a man faithfully fulfills his obligations to others, and to what is expected of him in his various roles in society, then we could say that he has integrity. If, on the other hand, a man fails to fulfill or honour his core commitments, because of malicious intentions or acts, or through weakness, cowardice, or even ignorance, then to this extent he may be said to be lacking in integrity.

So in the context of a civil servant, integrity would mean having the respect and commitment to the civil service institution and what it stands for, and its role in our society; and, fulfilling all the obligations and expectations that have been enshrined in our Civil Service Code. For the Sarawak Civil Service, we have also come up with our own "**Kod Budaya Kerja**" since 2000.

However, a civil servant may be able to fulfill all that is expected of him in his role and position, but if he does not fulfill his obligations as a responsible family man, or as a good



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neighbour, can we say then that he has integrity?

So, integrity has to do with the people's consistency in their beliefs and convictions, and the values that dictate how they behave and treat others. A person has integrity if he treats others with the same value, dignity and respect that he treats himself.

A civil servant who has integrity will relate with people the same way, in and out of his civil servant personae. If we view our roles as civil servants the same way that others view it, it will be easy for us to act consistently, in and outside of our official capacities.

For example, if I am in charge of registering births, I would dispense of my duty with the same care and efficiency as I would have done if it's the birth records of my own child that I am going to process and document. I wouldn't want to make mistakes, and I wouldn't like to make the person, who is a total stranger to me, wait for his child's birth certificate any longer than necessary. I would extend to him as much assistance that I can provide to make the process as pleasant for him as possible. I would approach my work with the same joy and delight that that person, with the birth of his child, must be experiencing. This kind of work attitude undoubtedly demonstrates integrity because the

person is consistent in his emotions and actions, providing efficient and caring service to someone who is a total stranger to him in much the same way that he will serve someone who is of his own family.

RAKAN Sarawak:

How do you view the civil service' role in enhancing integrity in society?

STATE SECRETARY:

Whatever we do has important implications and impact in society. The one question that the civil service can take the lead in asking, and finding answer to is "What kind of society and what kinds of structures and practices within a society are most conducive to personal integrity?"

We can either promote or undermine efforts essential to having or practicing integrity, on both the personal or organizational levels, with what we choose to do within the civil service institution. Our systems and processes must help promote or enhance integrity. So it goes without saying that we are here to exemplify or demonstrate what integrity is all about.

I mentioned earlier that our efforts to enhance integrity goes right to the core of where integrity begins- which is in the heart and soul of every individual. And so, our approaches,

strategies and measures focus on “who” the civil servant is, and what is the “heart” of a civil servant’s vocation.

RS RAKAN Sarawak:

How are we nurturing or enhancing an environment conducive to personal integrity within the Sarawak Civil Service?

STATE SECRETARY:

We have come up with six agendas that will enhance integrity in the civil service. These agendas are, I believe, essential in creating an environment conducive for each of us to practice and apply personal integrity in our tasks as civil servants.

The first agenda is to “enhance the quality mindset and lifestyle” among our civil servants. Basically, this is to constantly remind ourselves that quality is a process, a never-ending journey of improvement at both the personal and at the organizational levels.

Secondly, we will provide excellent public service delivery system. We are a “customer-centric” organization, and we show these by putting public interest first and foremost.

Thirdly, we will enhance the personality, ethics and image of the civil service. 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. Our physical structures and surroundings must be clean at all times, with a welcoming and friendly ambience. The way we carry ourselves – in our manner of speech, appearance (dressing and grooming), and in the way we relate to others politely and gently – must set us apart as a breed of distinction. It doesn’t matter what our rank or position in the civil service is, a civil servant must always carry himself with pride, not arrogance, because he is a part of a revered and distinguished public institution. 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 in the global arena of nations. We must be able to hold our own in

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the company of our peers both at the national and international levels, and also among corporate personalities, both here and abroad.

Fourthly, we will deliver what we promise with a sense of urgency. I personally think that the longest time we should allow ourselves to make a decision on anything that is referred to us is three weeks maximum. And we must never let up in our efforts to reduce the number of days that we process applications and respond to requests from the public. With ICT at our disposal, there is no reason why we should not be able to.

The fifth agenda is to enhance greater public-private sector facilitation or communication. The private sector is the engine of economic growth,

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and we cannot afford to slow down their progress and processes by being inefficient, unprofessional and unethical. We must provide them the fastest possible assistance and decision without compromising on legal and ethical standards.

Our sixth agenda will be to promote and encourage “site visit – see to verify” work culture. We cannot serve the people well if we are not directly in touch and in tune with their needs and concerns. We should be right where the people are. We will schedule as many working visits and meetings as we can to our district and sub-district offices so that we can immediately verify and respond appropriately to the peoples’ concerns and needs.

These six agenda are the key factors that will enhance and sustain the qualities and features of a civil service institution that is worthy of respect and admiration by the public that it serves. We must always remember that the civil service is an institution revered and respected in civilized societies. It can only remain this way throughout history if we, the civil servants, will live up to that image by practicing the highest standards of professionalism and integrity, not only in our work places but in our private lives as well.



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