

Report On The Courtesy Call To Y.A.B. Dato' Seri Abdullah Bin Haji Ahmad Badawi, Prime Minister And Patron Of Balai Ikhtisas Malaysia

By: Ir. Choo Kok Beng

Date : 7 June 2005
Time : 4.30 p.m. to 6.30 p.m.
Venue : 13th Floor, Kementerian Keselamatan Dalam Negeri Pusat Pentadbiran Kerajaan Persekutuan, PUTRAJAYA Malaysia

1. INTRODUCTION

The Chairman of BIM, Hjh. Ungku Anna binti Hj. Ungku Mohamed greeted the Patron and thanked him for giving the opportunity to BIM members for this courtesy call despite of his busy schedule. She thanked the YAB PM for accepting the invitation to be the Patron of BIM and also explained on the occasions when the Prime Minister was closely related to BIM as early as in 1984.

- YAB gave an exclusive interview as the Minister of Education which was featured in BIM Magazine, Ikhtisas-the Professional, Vol. 2, No. 3, Oct/Nov/Dec 1984
- YAB was the Guest of Honour attending the BIM Fellowship Dinner on December 1992 when he was the Foreign Affairs Minister of Malaysia
- Launching and Addressing the Opening Ceremony of the BIM International Conference on WTO and Liberalisation of Trades in Services on 28-29 September 1999.

She introduced to YAB the large delegation comprising of our Past Chairmen, Presidents of Member Institutions, the Executive Committee, Representatives of the Young Professionals and the Secretariat Staff. Almost all the leaders of all the leading professional bodies in Malaysia were there and felt very excited to meet the CEO of the nation - the Honourable Prime Minister of our beloved nation. We were there to express our heartiest

congratulation in persons even though it's more than a year since his appointment. We are indeed deeply honoured and proud to receive his kind assent to be our Honourable Patron of BIM.

The category of the twenty (20) institutions as members representing four Special Interest Groups was later explained as follows:

- Medical & Healthcare;
- Engineering, Construction and Property;
- Pure and Applied Sciences;
- Accounting, Business, Commerce and Legal Services.

The membership strength of BIM was mentioned to total of about 60,000 individual members including ordinary, corporate, graduates and student members. BIM was therefore, a huge resource bank of experienced and knowledgeable professionals. They are of great asset to our nation especially in this era of the K-economy.

The reserve and conservative nature

professionals are to face the challenges of a globalised world in the 21st century, especially with the impending liberalisation of Professional Services, initially within the ASEAN region.

It is realised that Malaysia needs to have skilled and enlightened professionals to drive our K-economy from the "slow" to the "fast". To make the quantum leap, it then required a menu of enlightened policies to effect a societal change of mind-set to match the ever shifting paradigm of a borderless world and liberalised global economy. There would be a need for a prompt and professional delivery system and to man the system, more and more professionals are needed.

2. THE ISSUES FORWARDED

The BIM Board of Management, comprising of Presidents of 20 member institutions had brain-stormed, evaluated and short listed four (4) important topics which were believed could help to bring greater respect and wealth to Malaysia for



BIM Patron with the Presidents of Member Institutions

of Malaysian professionals were deduced as they are often quite contented to play safe and provide in the background supporting expertise and services to get things done. BIM was working towards changing this "weak" mindset if the

attention of the YAB Prime Minister. These were thought to be in line with the Government's development strategy of which the successes would also require the support and cooperation of the Government.

- i) The first was to "Attain Greater Recognition for the Malaysian Professionals". The professionals need to be motivated and the "walk the talk" motivation was best demonstrated by having the BIM under the patronage of the Prime Minister Department.
- ii) The second was to "Create a More Conducive Environment for the Professional Services to Flourish". Professional services are product of creativity, innovation and the output of the right fit-for-purpose mix of the 3T's, viz : Talents, Technologies and Tolerance. To attain shared values in the area of Tolerance within a multi-racial plural Malaysian society would call for a professional approach.
- iii) The third was the "Challenge to Make Malaysia the Centre of Excellence for Professional Services in the ASEAN Free Trade Area". Malaysia as a brand would be a good case study and a suitable model for other developing countries to emulate. It was not just success that sells, but the understanding of failures with lessons learnt such as overcoming the "first world assets and a third world maintenance" syndrome. Malaysian Professionals competency and skills matched international best practice benchmarks. The combination of a great brand of "Malaysia" coupled with international benchmarked practices and supported by a menu of enlightened policies would result in projecting Malaysia as a centre of excellence for Professional Services in the ASEAN Free Trade Area.
- iv) The fourth was "Professionals in the Preservation of the Environment for Sustainable Development". Professionals being members of their respective civil societies subscribe to their respective codes of ethics and/or codes of professional practices. Guided by both these codes and their trainings, and keeping themselves current with the world's development such as trade and the environment, the Kyoto Protocol etc, the professionals are concerned for the environment and the need to have in place integrity

management system. The combination of the above primary concerns places the professionals in the pole position for congregation of people in the preservation of the environment and sustainable development.

3. STATUS AND ACTION

It is recognised that there are already in place activities which give greater recognition of the professionals such as the Engineers Week, PAM meet the public events and public colloquiums. So have the doctors, dentists and pharmacists working with Government authorities to improve their respective contributions to good health of Malaysians. Additional measures to bring about faster and greater recognition which involve the Government are:

- Declaring a Professional Week for the Country;
- Supporting the development of a Professional Enclave in Putrajaya by allotting 30 ha of land for this purpose on a long term lease;
- Engaging the services of the Professional Bodies to Mentor Students undergoing professional degree courses;
- Encouraging all professional bodies to have CPD, and
- To review the Scientific and Technical Civil Services.

To create a more conducive environment for the Professional Services to flourish there would be a need to conduct a study to reduce if not eliminate restrictions to achieve a prompt and quality assured delivery system and policies to encourage investment into professional consultancy organisations. BIM would like to solicit YAB's assistance for the Government to consider the following:

- i) The changing of the collection of service tax to payment upon collection from payment after invoicing. The present system imposed an unnecessary burden on the professionals when they have to pay before collecting their fees;
- ii) The setting up of a revolving fund of RM500 million to support the

- development and export of professional service. This could be similar to revolving funds established to support the agriculture or manufacturing sectors. The fund could be obtained by setting aside say 10% of the annual professional services tax collected;
- iii) Providing pioneer status for professional services organisation set up to export their services, and
- iv) Ensuring that the relevant Government agencies honour and abide by the approved scale of fees for professional services rendered.

As to making Malaysia the centre of excellence of Professional Services in the ASEAN Free Trade Area, professional bodies should be encouraged, motivated and supported by appropriate Government policies to lobby for and host their respective professions' regional or international secretariats. The Malaysian Professional Enclave could double up to host such centralised regional or international secretariats. The Government could provide the seed funding necessary until such time that they can be self-supporting. It should be noted that IEM is now the secretariat for the ASEAN Federation of Engineering Organisation (AFEO), the secretariat for the ASEAN Engineers Register (AER) and the secretariat of the Federation of Engineering Institutions of Islamic Countries (FEIIC). Through these, Malaysian engineers are getting greater international recognition and can have easier access and better networking for business.

On the "Professionals in the Preservation of the Environment for Sustainable Development," BIM was of the view that the Environment per se is a multi faceted subject that involves all professionals and the community. The Government could call upon the knowledge, experience, expertise and networking abilities of the members of BIM which has a combined membership of 60,000 comprising individuals who are highly educated, creative, technically very competent, possesses integrity and socially responsible, bounded by their professional code to make society a better place for all. The action plan to protect the environment and ensure sustainable

development advocated are as below:

- Policies on land use by way of a nationally coordinated and integrated land use plan that takes in account studies on sustainability of the natural resources e.g. water supply versus the intended land use e.g. commercial farming as in the Cameron Highlands.
- Policies on land use by way of detailed and carefully studied State Level Master Plans, District Plans and Local Plans that map out in detail the intentions of the National Level Plans by taking into account the State Level and local demographics and statistics.
- Policies on use of sustainable resources by way of Encouragement and Incentives on use of Renewable and Recyclable Energy e.g. solar power, mini hydro electric power, solid waste incineration etc. Impose a requirement on national utility companies like State Water Authorities and TNB to set aside a budget for research on recycling and alternative approaches.
- Policies on reduction of energy usage by means of imposing guidelines on consumption of resources and energy like water, electricity etc. and setting a national SUSTAINABILITY/ENERGY RATING of all materials used to take into account the cost of their manufacture in terms of their sustainability and energy required to manufacture e.g. timber versus plastics versus aluminium etc. The reduction of petroleum consumption and pollution by encouraging use of diesel, annual inspection of vehicles for roadworthiness after 5 years etc should be propagated.
- Policies on preservation of environment such as relocating all riverside squatter settlements and industrial users that are polluting our water resources or requiring polluting industries to put in place waste management policies within a specific timeframe.
- Policies on education to not just consumers but also the producers

BIM through its numerous professional Special Interest Groups is ready to respond to the Government's request to provide "national service" for matters of setting

policies and national level planning. Starting from this year, we have started to organise an annual "Professional Evening". Unfortunately, YAB is not available to attend this function to be held on 23 July 2005 at the Legend Hotel, KL. Nevertheless, we are extending our invitation to YAB for next year's function which will be held on 22 July 2006 at a leading hotel in Kuala Lumpur.

4. THE VIEWS OF THE PATRON

The YAB PM highlighted the followings that required BIM's attention and action.

- Human Capital Capacity Building/Development;
- Change of payment procedure for service tax;
- Setting up of a revolving fund to support the export of professional services;
- Setting up of an International Standard Professional Enclave;
- Placing BIM under the patronage of the Prime Minister's Department, and
- Attending the annual Professional Evening cum dinner.

5. NON-DISCUSSED ISSUES BY THE PM

- Declaring a Professional Week for the country;
- Engaging professional bodies to mentor students undergoing professional degree courses;
- Encouraging all professional bodies to have CPD;
- To review the Scientific and Technical Civil Services;
- Conduct a study to reduce if not eliminate restrictions to achieve a prompt and quality assured delivery system;
- Ensuring that the relevant Government agencies honour and abide by the approved scale of fees for professional services rendered, and
- The policies advocated for the Preservation of the Environment for Sustainable Development.

6. RECOMMENDATION AND UNDERTAKING

The item which the Patron expressed as not necessary to pursue was to "grant

pioneer status for Professional Organisations set-up to export our professional services."

It would be very important for BIM to act quickly on matters listed in item 4 above. From informal discussion, there was general consensus that each of the six issues should be assigned to a small task force headed by a member of the Board of Management. It is suggested as the followings which could be changed if necessary.

- i) On Human Capital Building/Development the PLPP Board should take the necessary action;
- ii) For the service tax issue, Dato' Sofian from the Bar Council to set up a committee and put up a paper for submission to the Patron;
- iii) Dat'o Hj. Mohd Ishak bin Mohd Yusof together with Datuk Hj. Zakaria and others will prepare the paper on the "revolving fund" giving consideration to the Patron's advice on using a Consortium of Bankers;
- iv) I will head the committee for the development of the Professional Enclave with Hj. Ahmad Suhaimi and others;
- v) The Chairman will prepare the letter to confirm placing BIM under the patronage of the Prime Minister's Department, and
- vi) John S.C. Loh will follow-up to get a date suitable for our Patron for the 2005 BIM Professional Evening and dinner.

As you are aware, immediate action has already been taken on item 6 (vi) above. Similarly, on 14 June 2005, the PLPP Board has taken action to have an arrangement with Kumpulan IKRAM to address the issue of human capital development and some preliminary discussions have been conducted on the professional enclave. With further approval, Dato' Sofian and Dato' Hj. Mohd Ishak would be advised to commence on their tasks for us to report back to the Patron before 7 July 2005 on the progress i.e. one month of the first meeting with the Patron. ■

Editor's Note: This write-up was extracted from BIM Magazine with permission.