

**SPEECH BY**  
**BRIGADIER GENERAL (RETIRED) DATO SERI PAHLAWAN**  
**SHAHRIL ANWAR BIN HAJI MA'AWIAH**  
**PERMANENT SECRETARY**

**OPENING CEREMONY OF THE**  
**16<sup>th</sup> EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (EDP) FOR**  
**SENIOR OFFICIALS**

**SULTAN HAJI HASSANAL BOLKIAH INSTITUTE**  
**OF DEFENCE AND STRATEGIC STUDIES**  
**MINISTRY OF DEFENCE**

**TUESDAY, 23 MARCH 2021**

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

Alhamdulillahilahi Rabbil 'Alamin. Wassallatu Wassalammu 'Ala Ashrafil Anbiyaie Wal Mursalin Wa 'Ala Alihi Wa Sohbihi Ajma'in

Your Excellencies;

Deputy Commissioner of the Royal Brunei Police Force;

Deputy Permanent Secretary;

Chief of Staff of the Royal Brunei Armed Forces;

Acting Director General of the Public Service Department;

Defence Advisers/Attachés;

Professor Francesco Mancini and Dr. Caroline Brassard from the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore;

Distinguished Guests;

(And) Participants of the 16<sup>th</sup> Executive Development Programme.

Assalamualaikum and a very good afternoon,

I am pleased to be here, at the opening of the Ministry of Defence Executive Development Programme 2021, which I have the honour of officiating.

At the outset, I congratulate every officer that has been nominated to join this programme...

... And my warm welcome to our friends from

- the Ministry of Finance and Economy,
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
- Ministry of Primary Resources and Tourism,
- the Royal Brunei Police Force, and
- Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali,
- as well as foreign military officers from Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Singapore and to the executive members from the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy... some of whom are present online.

We are pleased to partner again with the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy for this 16<sup>th</sup> iteration of the EDP, who has been outstanding in delivering the programme.

I note much work has been done to ensure this continues. Our longstanding partnership with the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy has afforded us to be understanding in finding the best approach to conduct the programme in the midst of limitations and restrictions with the COVID-19 situation.

Their support in providing a hybrid form of physical and online learning environment highlights the close working relations and our joint determination to achieve the EDP objectives.

Set against these challenging times, it makes the EDP even more important for professional development in the Ministry of Defence.

The Ministry of Defence and the Royal Brunei Armed Forces continues to place great emphasis in developing its human resources, and for the programme to also contribute in ensuring officers from across ministries and various organisations in leadership roles, are capable in fulfilling their current and future responsibilities.

[I see many of our invited guests in this room are alumni of the MINDEF EDP.] This year, I am pleased to see the broad range of disciplines in this co-hort, from defence and security, finance, primary resources and tourism, law and Islamic studies, and various engineering disciplines.

This diversity of participation is one of the strengths of this programme as it brings different perspectives. The participation of our close international friends further serves in enriching the experience, providing more value to the programme.

In recalling and taking heed from His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Negara Brunei Darussalam's Titah at the Opening of the 17<sup>th</sup> Legislative Council last week, the excerpt of the Titah amongst others depicted that:

.... Policy holders must be transparent and brave...

.... His Majesty also called for and stressed the importance of continuous *muzakarah* or dialogue among stakeholders...

... and to share perspectives on important issues to the people and nation.

With this in mind... as policy practitioners, we will constantly face a changing environment. Over this past year alone, we have experienced unprecedented socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 across the globe and we are seeing new form of norms emerging.

With any new environment, it brings new challenges and new opportunities may also arise. Adaptability and flexibility is needed in providing the best for the well-being of the people and for our nations to continue to prosper and be resilient.

This requires us in government to reflect and re-strategise, taking into consideration the different stakeholders, with different priorities to provide the maximum contribution towards the national objectives.

Each of our organisation is part of a whole system and we must face the realities of compounding pressures from resource constraints, and the proliferation of priorities, and in most cases, competing priorities.

And one of the core responsibilities of leaders and leadership is to always ensure the most efficient and effective ways to achieve objectives.

The programme sets out to equip participants to better appreciate the dynamics of policy making and decisions, not only within a single organisation, but also attuned to look beyond the confines of individual departments or ministries.

The exposure to new and innovative approaches to management is intended for participants to take a systematic approach and innovation for more effective and practical solutions and efficient delivery of outcomes.

And the programme also looks to enhance leadership qualities as policy makers and holders face a range of complex challenges directed from internal and external forces, some not even within their control. These challenges require collective efforts, leveraging on different strengths to manage them effectively.

That is why the Ministry of Defence strongly advocates Whole-of-Nation and Whole-of-Government approach as a priority. One of the key element of defence strategy is for a holistic defence that calls us to look into ways to support national development particularly through innovative research and technology. This has been articulated by the Second Minister of Defence in all his past speeches in the Legislative Council, and is reflected in every aspect of defence.

At the practical level, the programme will continue to have interactions with policy makers in different ministries to learn first-hand, the policy making process and its challenges, in government.

I appreciate the Institute's lead in this component of the programme.

In this regard, while I note that the participants would see the Policy Analysis Exercise (PAE) Paper as an academic exercise, and one part of the course, the Ministry of Defence sees that the papers and their findings provide a substantive contribution to national discourse and conversation on issues effecting society.

I would therefore encourage participants to look into issues and challenge facing all levels of society and government, while building on previous studies where possible.

We hope to share your papers to major stakeholders at the end of the process as a contribution to the overall efforts to affect change.

Ladies and gentleman,

For these reasons, the EDP is a mandatory course for our local officers. Through the continued development of our officers, the EDP also contributes to raising the *organisational* capability to meet challenges effectively.

Over the years, I am pleased to see the consistent improvements that is centered to ensure the learning objectives of the EDP are fulfilled. The focus of this programme continues to be on public policy and management. Integral to the process is the delivery of PAE papers that contributes to organisational and national strategic objectives. One that I know Defence Executives look forward to read.

In ensuring policy papers are of relevance and in-depth to current issues and challenges, we have started to invite key stakeholders and will extend this to representatives of the foreign missions in attendance to sit in the relevant officers Presentation Week of the PAE. This aims to provide peer review and guidance to deepen your respective policy recommendations upon submission of the final paper.

And for MINDEF/RBAF participants, the top papers will also be given the opportunity to present personally to members of the Defence Executive Committee.

I can assure you, as most in the alumni will attest of the Programme, it will be intensive. With the current format, much depends on you to make this journey of learning a rewarding experience.

So I encourage all of you to be open, listen to perspectives shared and be engaged in your conversations, be it with your new found best friends here and also with the excellent teaching faculty that will guide you throughout the programme.

And to the LKY School of Public Policy, we look forward to the school's ongoing support in delivering and ensuring a first-rate programme.

With the kalimah "Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim", it is my pleasure to officially declare the start of the 16<sup>th</sup> Ministry of Defence Executive Development Programme 2021.

Wabillahit Taufiq Walhidayah Wassalamu'alaikum Warahmatullahi Ta'ala Wabarakatuh.