



**PERSIDANGAN PEMANTAPAN KEPIMPINAN & INTEGRITI**  
**BERSAMA**  
**KETUA AUDIT NEGARA**

**EXCELLENT LEADERSHIP & MAINTAINING INTEGRITY**

**5 September 2020**  
**Zenith Room 2 & 3, The Zenith Hotel**  
**Kuantan, Pahang Darul Makmur**

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**Bismillahirrahmanirrahim,**

**Assalamualaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh dan  
Salam Sejahtera,**

**Yang Berbahagia Datuk Nik Azman Nik Abdul Majid,  
Ketua Audit Negara,**

**Warga keluarga Jabatan Audit Negara yang saya hormati sekalian.**

**Alhamdulillah, marilah kita bersama-sama melafazkan rasa syukur  
kepada Allah SWT, kerana dengan berkat limpah kurniaNya jua kita  
diberi kesempatan untuk berkumpul di majlis yang pada saya amat**

bermakna pada pagi ini. Saya juga sangat berterima kasih kepada YBhg. Datuk Nik kerana sudi menjemput saya untuk ikut sama di dalam majlis ini, lebih-lebih lagi mengenai satu topik yang sangat dekat dengan hati saya. Terutama sekali mengenai subjek Integriti. Walaupun saya telah bersara dari Perkhidmatan Awam lebih 8 tahun yang lalu, iaitu apabila saya menjangkau usia 61 tahun, Perkhidmatan Awam masih sehati di hati saya.

2. Di kesempatan ini, saya juga ingin mengucapkan Selamat Hari Kebangsaan ke-63 kepada kita semua. Semoga kita terus merdeka, bebas dan berdaulat. Walaupun banyak yang telah dikecapi oleh negara kita dalam jangka masa yang secara relatif agak singkat, kita harus mengambil semangat kemerdekaan ini untuk terus maju, menjadi yang terbaik mungkin, supaya tanah air yang kita cintai ini akan kekal merdeka, bebas dan berdaulat selama-lamanya, insya Allah. Begitu juga, setiap individu di dalam Jabatan Audit Negara, hatta di seluruh perkhidmatan awam negara kita, harus menanam semangat yang tinggi, seiring dengan tema Hari Kebangsaan tahun ini – Prihatin Rakyat. Di mana kita sebagai penjawat awam sentiasa memberikan yang terbaik untuk Rakyat dan Negara.

Datuk Nik, Ladies and Gentleman,

3. It is an honour and a pleasure to be with all of you today. I have always been very proud to be part of the public sector, and to share with you today, the lessons I have learned in my 40 odd years of endeavouring to serve our Country, if counting being with PETRONAS as also serving our country. Things I learned along the way. Things I practised in the past and practising until today. These

worked for me and I believe for many others, and possibly could work for you too. So, thank you so much for inviting me today. Especially Datuk Nik. Thank you for providing me this platform to speak on a topic that I am deeply passionate about. Integrity. More importantly to discuss and exchange views with you, senior officials of Jabatan Audit Negara, the bastion of accounting integrity of the Federal and States governments, government agencies and public authorities. Upon your shoulder, rest our country's integrity. It is indeed a very heavy responsibility.

4. So although our session is for 3 hours, I will only speak for about 30 minutes to establish certain key points. I look forward to the remaining time to exchange views with you on the topic i.e “excellent leadership” and “maintaining integrity”.

5. I read many books on leadership not only for the MBA, readings associated with Harvard's AMP (Advanced Management Program) but more for pleasure! Hahahaha! And, until today I am not able to differentiate between management and leadership. Let alone “excellent leadership”. Suffice to say, for me leadership is about motivating a group of people to act towards achieving a common goal. For me, an excellent leader must :

- lead by example.
- should not have 2 standards, but if he has 2 standards, the standard for him as the leader must be higher.
- let me also add that for A LEADER IN THE CIVIL SERVICE, I come from the school that believe that A GOOD LEADER OF THE CIVIL SERVICE is unseen, unheard BUT FELT.

I very much like a quotation from Lao Tse on leadership :

*To lead people, walk beside them*

*As for the best leaders, people do not notice their existence*

*The next best, the people honour and praise*

*The next, people fear*

*And the next, people hate*

*When the best leader's work is done, the people say*

*'We did it ourselves'*

– Lao Tse

Ladies and Gentleman,

6. As some of you might know, I came from an obscure kampung called Cherok Paloh, which is somewhere between Kuantan and Pekan in this state of Pahang. About 30 km from where we are now. Has anyone here heard of Cherok Paloh? I don't blame you if you have not. It is "Cherok" – obscure. From a kampung many had not heard of, here I am, speaking as the Chairman of Enforcement Agency Integrity Commission, a former Chairman of PETRONAS, the only Malaysian company in the Global Fortune 500. And, I am most proud to say (with humility) as a former KSN.

7. This is not about boasting. There are some important lessons in it. Firstly, it doesn't matter where we come from, what matters is what we do with our lives. Secondly, although it doesn't matter

where we come from, we should never forget our roots. Not once did I forget about Cherok Paloh. In fact, I am where I am today because of Cherok Paloh. In fact, I am where I am today in spite of Cherok Paloh. Correction, not “in spite”. Because of Cherok Paloh. For me, Cherok Paloh was my raison d'être for joining the Civil Service.

8. Back to ‘not forgetting our roots’. Our presence in this room today is the collective result of a series of people, events, decisions and opportunities that lined up in our path that brought us here. There would have been many junctions along the way, and a combination of different turns could have resulted in infinite alternate paths. But here we are today. Because of the people who guided and nurtured us, the opportunities that were given and the challenges we chose to face.

9. Let's now go back again to Cherok Paloh. Maybe no one here has heard of Cherok Paloh, but most Senior Civil servants when I was KSN – the KSUs and the DGs – heard it ad nauseam by the time I left the Service on 24 June 2012. Cherok Paloh was a very small kampung where for many, their livelihood depended on the rubber smallholding. Once a year, when my relatives had to pay the ‘cukai tanah’, they had to travel to Pekan where the land office was. And since it's so far, metaphorically, and in those days, physically, they practically had to take a day off. That meant no income for that day. But to get to Pekan, they had to cycle for some distance, cross the river twice on a boat and ferry, and cycle again. Sometimes, they might reach the office 10-15 minutes late. Only to be told by the Peon at the Land Office to come back the next day. Can you imagine

that? A whole day of travel, arrived 15 minutes late and you have to come back another day! That peon at the Land Office gave me the rationale for my career. I wanted to make lives better for the likes of my “relatives” in Cherok Paloh and the whole country. I wanted to be the peon who will say, “It’s okay. You have travelled the whole day. I can work an extra 10 minutes to get this processed”. That’s it.

10. Alhamdulillah, I got to be in a position of influence particularly in the last 6 years of my service. That position and that amanah gave me the opportunity to lead Malaysia’s public officials to give their best in whatever positions they were holding.

11. I am sure everyone here has your own ‘Cherok Paloh’. Cherok Paloh as a concept. Something that drives us to improve – ourselves, our family, our society, our country. I urge you to hold on to your Cherok Paloh. It gives meaning to what we do and motivates us to overcome challenges. If every one of us have that seed inside, to be the better peon, the better taxi driver, the better auditor – the better version of whatever we encounter – imagine how much better our Malaysia would be!

12. But it is very common to hear people say, “Yes I want to improve but they are not improving. They are the stumbling block. They don’t see what I see.” But who are they?

### **Focus on your Circle of Influence**

13. ‘They’ could be the parents, the company, the government or many other things. Of course there are many things which are not

within our control. But there are many more which are within our control. Many of us will be familiar with the concept of ‘Circle of Influence’ and ‘Circle of Concern’ made popular by Stephen Covey. In his book ‘The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People’, Stephen Covey lists ‘being proactive’ as the first habit. Instead of reacting to or worrying about conditions over which one has little or no control, Stephen Covey says proactive people focus their time and energy on things they can control. They focus their efforts on their ‘Circle of Influence’. They work on the things they can do something about: health, children, and problems at work. Reactive people, on the other hand, focus their efforts on the Circle of Concern – things over which they have little or no control: the national debt, terrorism, the weather, the price of oil. He posits that having an awareness of the areas in which one can influence decisions is the first step to becoming effective.

### **Think Beyond Our Remit**

14. But the ‘circle of influence’ does not have to dictate our ‘sphere of thinking’. While being realistic in drawing my circle of influence, I have always been very adventurous with my sphere of thinking. A key principle here is to think beyond now, into the 27th century, thinking beyond ourselves, beyond our current portfolio. What would my senior colleagues do in this scenario? What would my Sec Gen do? My Auditor General? The Prime Minister?

15. My abiding advice for myself and to every one is to think beyond our current remit. My advice to Adi, my EA at PETRONAS

was to think and behave like the PETRONAS CEO, like Tan Sri Wan Zul, and InsyaAllah he will be CEO one day.

16. When I was the Malaysian Trade Commissioner in Sydney, Australia between 1985 and 1992, one of my responsibilities was to submit periodic briefs and reports to the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) in KL. If I were to have done just that, I would have been doing what was expected of me perfectly fine. But I thought I must do beyond that. There was the Malaysian High Commissioner, the Deputy Chief of Mission and other Malaysian officers with whom I shared the office in Sydney. Somehow it didn't sound right that my seniors in MITI would know more about Malaysia's trade with Australia than the Malaysian High Commissioner to Australia. Forget about the territory and the turf between Ministries. Wouldn't the Prime Minister want our overseas missions to have seamless sharing and integration of information so that we can work effectively and respond immediately to queries? If I were to have been travelling and the PM's office needed trade information from Sydney, so many others could have provided that information.

### **Collaborate and Share**

17. I just spoke about sharing and disseminating information. But doesn't 'Information equal Power'? Actually it doesn't. If anyone had to call me during my vacation to get some information, because I was the only one who has it, that is not 'power'. That is 'foolishness'. Information, in itself, is of no value. The power is in an

outcome that is derived by using the information. If information is kept hidden in our drawers and hard drives or only in our head, it is useless. Today, knowledge expands at the speed of light. Yesterday's information is not only history, but in many cases, obsolete. So the information we keep may just be a repository of obsolete junk. But when shared, information takes a trajectory of its own. At best, someone can act on it to give us a competitive edge. At worst, misleading or false information can be debunked and thrown away.

18. The problem is 'personal glory'. Information hoarding happens because some worry about who will claim credit for the outcome. Do we perform our responsibility for personal glory? Or we do it because we are entrusted with the common good of the organisation? Of our country?

Ladies and Gentlemen,

19. I would now like to touch upon a number of factors which were very important in guiding me along in my life – at both personal and professional level.

### **See the Bigger Picture**

20. First is, as I alluded to earlier, to see myself as a member of the organisation. Not the unit, section, department or the division. But the whole organisation. That naturally meant I must think like the Minister or the CEO or the Auditor General. What would the Auditor General say or do? What outcome will be in the best interest of the

organisation, even if it's not the best outcome for my unit? When I was the KSU of MITI between 2004 and 2006, there was a building in London that was in the asset books of MITI but used as Tourism Malaysia's Office. There must have been historical reason why it was under MITI, but I couldn't find a logical reason why it should stay that way. If it was used for Tourism purposes, let the Ministry of Tourism manage and maintain it. It sounded quite straight forward. But there were others who objected. There was a matter of prestige attached to 'owning' the building. But it also came with a lot of convoluted accounting treatment to pass the cost to the Ministry of Tourism. I referred to it earlier as being in MITI's asset books, not as something that was owned by MITI. Because it wasn't. It was owned by the Government of Malaysia. I couldn't have seen that way if I didn't climb the walls of MITI to see beyond. So MITI passed the asset to the Ministry of Tourism. The Blue Ocean projects undertaken by Malaysia which I was one of the pioneers were premised on that principle.

## **Get a Mentor**

21. Second is getting a mentor. I am so glad that Ketua Audit Negara has this program. As much as possible, get a mentor from a functional area that is different from yours, so the mentor can also add breadth to your learning. I have had many great mentors, too many to mention. All along, they showed me how much more I could become. There were times they took the role of a friend, sounding board, critic or a motivator. They didn't make the decisions for me. The decisions were mine. But I was wiser for their counsel and wisdom. Thomas Edison was quoted to have said, "Genius is 1%

inspiration, and 99% perspiration.” What mentoring does is give us the benefit of the mentor’s genius without having to sweat. They have done the sweating, made the mistakes and learned the hard way. So that we don’t make the same mistakes. Sure, mistakes are great for learning. But let’s make new mistakes and not repeat the old ones!

22. In PEMUDAH I had Lily Rozita, a relatively young legal counsel from Shell as my Mentor. She would advise me on things that appeared so basic, so “101” but were blindsided from me.

### **End in Mind – Develop a Career Plan**

23. Third is to have the end-in-mind. This is a lot easier if we start our career thinking beyond our immediate unit and see past the ‘mental border’ of sections and divisions. If our career objective is to become the Auditor General of Malaysia, from day one, we should have the line of sight of our actions on the broader organisation. If we can’t see it, get others to help us see the bigger picture. After getting a feel for the organisation by speaking to colleagues from across functions and with guidance from a mentor, we should be able to come up with a career plan in the first six months. Think big. In 15 years, where do I want to be? What will it take for me to get there? Which different functions should I be exposed to in order to get there? Career plans are not cast in stone. They will change – they should change – as we mature in the organisation. Tweak it continuously, keep it dynamic. But that doesn’t mean the original plan was useless. To quote the Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu, “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” Many a

successful careers started with that single page plan. I am sure you will not regret crafting your own plan sooner rather than later. When you finally become the Deputy Auditor General or Auditor General in 15 – 20 years, you need not be nervous. You can settle quickly into the position as you would have had 15 years of preparation.

## **Service Orientation**

24. Fourth is service orientation. I spent over 38 years in the Civil Service. Though many naughty cynics would suggest that it is neither civil nor service when people speak about “Cherok Paloh all over again”! What does it mean to be in a services sector? I believe there are three key aspects to service orientation. They are:

- Engagement
- Client-focus
- Sense of urgency

25. Engagement is about listening. A service is not a service because the provider says so. It becomes a service only when the customer feels ‘being served’. Otherwise it is only a process involving two parties. Therefore, service requires us to listen to our customers about their needs and expectation. And do something about it!

26. Client-focus means not being driven by processes or KPIs, or anything else besides the client. Organisations exist to create value by serving customers. Everything else – the policies and guidelines, processes and KPIs should be subservient. If they don’t

complement the main goal of serving the customer, then we should change that. Never take the focus away from the customer. If we do, our customers will take the business away from us. If you don't believe me, thinking that we are in a monopolistic position, please think about the story of Jabatan Telekom, Telekom Malaysia, Celcom and Maxis.

27. Sense of urgency is about being responsive. It is not however about rushing decisions. But I could never understand why someone would delay making decisions just to make oneself appear important. It doesn't show importance, it shows incompetence! Every phone call, email, letter and query should be treated as urgent. The fact it is brought to our attention means someone is awaiting our response to move on with their job. Open it up, give due consideration and respond. Fast. If it can be done today, do it today. If it is a request for approval, and if we are not going to approve it, the least we could do is to have the courtesy to let them know that quickly. And tell them why it is not approved. They can move on with alternative options. As Collin Powell said, "bad news is not wine, it doesn't improve with age". And if the request will be approved, why not deliver the good news fast? Any delay in responding means we are delaying someone else's input and output. We are delaying them in reaching their goal. We are delaying our organisation in meeting its goal.

## **Integrity**

28. And finally, my favourite topic – integrity. It is about being honest and truthful. And, having consistency between principles,

expectations, words and deeds. In public and in private. Especially in private. When no one is watching.

29. Integrity is not just about avoiding corruption. That is but one small aspect. There is much more to integrity. We must be honest with how we spend our time at work. Objective in making our decisions. Fair and firm in managing our teams. Integrity must be the core of our being. It must be the foundational value of our personality, from where our thoughts, words and actions originate.

30. I urge you to embrace integrity proactively. Avoiding corruption and declining gifts are passive forms of integrity. But for us to move forward as an organisation 'defined by integrity', we need to do more. We need proactive integrity. Declining bribes is good, but what do we do when we see the same bribe being offered to our colleagues? Do we turn a blind eye and look the other way? We must not. We must advise our colleagues not to accept it, and report it when the advice is not heeded. From my experience, one sure way of failing a target is by not having a mechanism of reward and punishment. Of course, the reward for acting with integrity is built into our system. Because that is our duty. Development opportunities, promotions, a pat on the back – whatever that is appropriate. Because we must send the signal that integrity is acknowledged and celebrated. Appreciated.

31. Equally important, we must mete out punishment for breach of integrity. In public. Make it very clear that we do not tolerate it. Remove the cancer before it spreads. The tone from the top. The tone even from the very bottom.

**32. By putting self above the organisation, are we displaying integrity? What is integrity? One definition of integrity is giving one's best thoughts and effort towards the role one is entrusted with. Beyond the minimum required. Beyond the remit of what is good for just that position. Regardless of whether it is seen by others or not. I am going to repeat the mantra, more so when no one is watching!**

**33. Integrity is about removing all the limiting walls and blocks in our mind, to see what is best for the bigger picture – the Department, the Nation. But wait a minute, isn't that the role of the Auditor General to think about the Department?**

**34. Actually, it is not. If we wait until we become the Auditor General, before we think and behave like Datuk Nik Azman, we may never become the Auditor General. Our superiors will observe us and conclude we do not have the capacity and capability to be one because we have not demonstrated it.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**35. Having served in the public sector for some 4 decades, I would argue, that the role of Government and specifically National Audit Department must not be devalued to ONLY finding and reporting of other fellow public sectors' faults and mistakes. It has to take into consideration the distributive justice which Aristotle spoke about in his work. The public sector's role cannot be only to nudge, fix or incentivise good behaviour and, penalise and castigate the bad. It cannot be focused on just maximising GDP and balancing budgets. It must involve consumer experience and it has to lead in distributing**

social justice especially in fundamental areas like healthcare, education, housing and social cohesion. And, safety net by whatever name!

36. Let me end by referring to a reportedly old Arab saying which in essence means, “Justice lies in the heart of the judge”. There can be laws and there can be judges. However, ultimately justice can only be served where there is sound ethics in the hearts of those serving the judgement. The public service presides over the providence of the people of a country and so the service offered must realistically reflect the complexities of humanity.

Wabillahitaufiq wal hidayah, wassalamu’alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh.