Civil service needs 'foresight' approach to tackle challenges

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BRUNEI is likely to face considerable challenges in the next two decades in its efforts to sustain growth and development as the global economy is predicted to be sluggish due to declining oil prices.

Therefore, the country, its civil service in particular, should be prepared to face these challenges and see them as a catalyst to encourage more meaningful undertakings to ensure continued prosperity and stability.

This was stated by Dato Paduka Awang Haji Mohamad Roselan bin Haji Mohamad Daud, Acting Minister at the Prime Minister's Office, in his keynote address at the Forum on Strategic Foresight and Horizon Scanning for Policy Making organised by the Centre for Strategic and Policy Studies (CSPS) yesterday.

"In addition to the current difficulties stemming from oil woes, there are other emerging trends and issues that policymakers need to address," the acting minister, who was also the guest of honour at the event, said.

Highlighting the importance of taking foresightful approaches in policy making, the acting minister noted, "They (civil service) also

need to look beyond the normal 'business as usual' approach, plan ahead and see things from a multi-dimensional perspective instead of a linear one."

Dato Paduka Awang Haji Mohamad Roselan bin Haji Mohamad Daud, Acting Minister at the Prime Min-ister's Office, delivering his speech. – PHOTOS: AZROL AZMI

Dato Paduka Awang Haji Mohamad Roselan bin Haji Mohamad Daud, Acting Minister at the Prime Min-ister's Office, listening to a presentation delivered by Dr Jose Ramos, Action Foresight, Australia, yesterday

The forum, held at the CSPS building in Jalan Pasar Baru, was attended by more than 100 participants including permanent secretaries, deputy permanent secretaries, directors and senior officers from the government and relevant private sectors as well as CSPS board of directors.

The event aimed at introducing new insights on strategies for foresight analysis and horizon scanning and their relevance in policy making in the country.

"Foresight studies and the use of horizon scanning have gained significant recognition from policymakers, executive leadership teams and strategic planning departments throughout the world," the acting minister said, adding that strategic foresight and horizon scanning can act as a radar system for policy making, allowing early detection of opportunities and threats.

"This awareness of change opens up opportunities for intelligent interventions that the policy makers otherwise would not have known about or have got time to act on. Equipping themselves with early warning allows policymakers to strategically leverage change for success rather than being victims of change."

Applauding CSPS's intention to be an internationally-recognised 'Foresight Think Tank', the acting minister said CSPS will support organisational innovation and the design of 'anticipatory governance' strategies that fit its mandate, and serve the needs of the Government of His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam.

In the forum, the guest of honour and invited guests heard two presentations made by overseas speakers, Dr Jose Ramos from Australia and Cheryl Chung from Singapore.

Dr Jose Ramos of Action Foresight, Australia, in his presentation on 'Foresight for Public Policy in Brunei' touched on the key benefits and opportunities of using foresight approach in the domain of public policy and challenges.

Cheryl Chung of Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore, in her presentation titled 'Foresight Studies and Horizon Scanning for Policy Making in Singapore' shared the 'futures enterprise' in Singapore government and how it has impacted public policy making in the city state.