



In May 1992, Dato' Wahid received the coveted Henry Adams Award from The Institution of Structural Engineers, United Kingdom.

Dato' Wahid is clearly contented and adequate. Yet he continuously learn how to keep abreast with technological advancement and update himself with current management thinking and practices.

Ask him about any aspect of management, he will surely have the answer with complete details in his database. He has also been sharing it with people in

JKR and certain institutes of higher learning. Says he, "Whatever knowledge one knows about, he should try to practise it as much as he can. Otherwise, there is no point. Rightly, knowledge should be distributed." Engineering field aside, Dato' Wahid also used to attend Harvard Business School's Senior Management Program as well as Private Sector Training and Attachment Programme for Senior Malaysian Public Sector Executive conducted by Stanford University and Bechtel Corporation.

He is a Fellow of the Institution of Engineers Malaysia, Member of Road Engineering Association Malaysia and Member of Malaysian Structural Steel Association. Asked about his retirement plan, Dato' Wahid says he leaves it up to Allah SWT. **SR**

THE COMPLETE PROFESSIONAL

By Shukri Rahman

Dato' Prof. Ir. Dr Wahid Omar, Public Works Department (JKR)'s Deputy Director General I, is one of the brains behind the rapid adoption of IT in the agency, Malaysia's biggest technical department. A model to other departments, JKR was awarded The Asean Outstanding Engineering Achievement Award in 1997. In his usual no-nonsense straight talking approach, Dato' Wahid talked to *Suara Roadcare* on a wide range of issues from Federal Road Maintenance to the future of JKR. Excerpts...

On the FRM mandate...

Considering there were inadequate staff, equipment and budget as well as rising ageing road network, the government agreed to the proposal for the privatization of the Federal Road.

It officially started on February 16, 2001.

With this exercise, routine and scheduled maintenance works which were previously carried out by Class F contractors or by department, are now handed over to the concession company to implement.

The implementation of road maintenance works by right should be better managed, more organized and integrated under the concession. By giving the jobs to small contractors, concession companies could help them in terms of work quality, especially in technical matters and management.

On the performance of concession companies...

Overall the performance of concession companies in maintaining Federal Road is satisfactory. Having said that, we still receive complaints from the public on the quality of work done.

Nevertheless, I believe the concessionaires can raise their quality of services further if they are determined, responsible and sincere.

On government expectations and suggestions for improvement...

The government expects the privatization exercise will improve the quality of Federal Road network. Concession

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companies should still adhere to the 'zero pot-hole' policy for the Federal Road network. They should also carry out a first class scheduled maintenance works, which meet the specifications. To achieve this, a Quality Plan should be in place and implemented.

To exceed the aspirations of the government and JKR, concession companies should elevate their management structure. Among others, I would suggest that they provide a more effective communication system between the mobile personnel and the management. This will reduce the response time in handling problems on site.

I believe concession companies should also be more sensitive towards the safety of road users whilst working on site. They should provide adequate equipment and safety features including warning signs and road furnitures. At least, they should comply with related Technical Instruction so that road users' safety is more certain.

On the future of road industry and maintenance in Malaysia ...

In Malaysia, more than 90% of trade products are transported by road. As such, it is clear that road has a very sizeable and important economic value for this country. As the main government agency entrusted with managing most of the Federal and State Road network, the PWD always strives to improve the quality of this invaluable asset.

In this regard, the emphasis is on maintenance works of existing network so that the road always resembles the original condition. From time to time, the government will upgrade strategic roads in terms of communication and economic needs so that these roads will be able to stimulate further social and economic activities.

Increasing population and number of vehicles have resulted in men, vehicles and other assets coming into greater contacts. To enhance the safety level of road users, the government has planned various programmes including building motorcycle lanes.

On strategies that road construction companies should adopt...

The government is of the view that the concession companies should adopt a 'total maintenance' management approach. This means they should critically look after the road, which they maintain, as per the government's trust, and not solely guided by profit-motive as the objective.

A more effective road patrol is needed so that every damage can be identified quickly and action can be effected speedily.

Concession companies should also gather and update inventory data for their respective zones every month and report to the government.

On his management style and leadership philosophy...

I believe in participatory style of management. Firstly, it is about building teams. If there is no teamwork, the organization will be a weak one. Secondly, it is also about getting people involved in the planning as it leads to ownership (of the project). In turn, it will lead to a higher degree of commitment and accountability.

Many people mistakenly believe that a Boss is equal to a Leader. A leader does three things. He coaches his subordinates. He instills confidence in them. And he challenges them to take bigger roles. As the leader coaches his subordinates, they feel more prepared and become more confident. As confidence increases, they are more willing to take on bigger and bigger challenges.

On JKR's competency and future...

I would like to see the whole JKR improve, especially with regard to its competency. Although JKR has the competency, we need to bring its strength to a higher level. In a competitive environment envisaged post-WTO, we can only compete with competency in areas such as management, design and product delivery. I am not talking merely about knowledge and skills. We want to make sure that we have a shared collective attitude and habits, which are competency-driven.

Previous success does not guarantee future triumph. The key factors are whether we can live up to the challenges and how well we can adopt and adapt to change. We must be able to rise to the occasion and be prepared to fulfill the government's future terms of reference. **SR**

Man's mind stretched to a new idea, never goes back to its original dimensions.

- Oliver Wendell Holmes