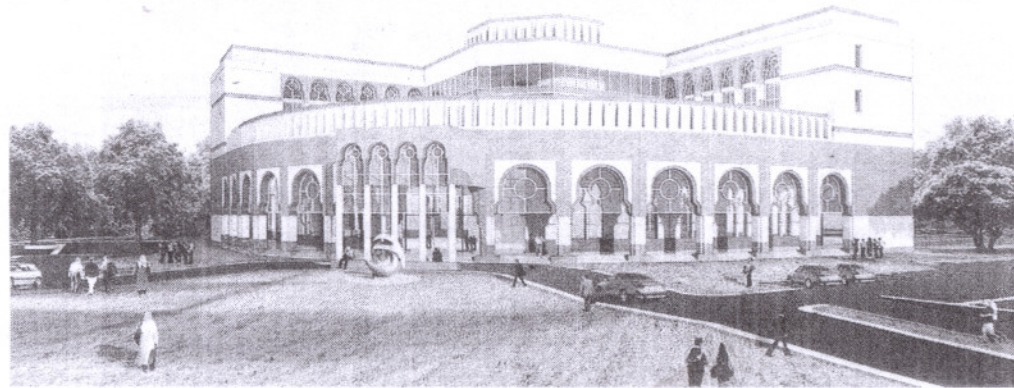


# Designing and building human governance



**A**CTIVATING the listening faculty in order to actualise human governance was the subject of discussion in the last two columns. At Putra Business School (PUTRA) we emphasise this prerequisite to learning not only to our students but also our staff. While pursuing this path to create awareness among PUTRA individuals about the necessity to sharpen the listening faculty, we wish to stress that other actions are equally necessary to begin the journey to actualise human governance.

In this column we share more about our journey to bring human governance to PUTRA, in the hope this can help others who are keen to pursue this path.

Since human governance is about being human, the participation of

everyone in the organisation – at least everyone who claims that they are human (claiming or perceiving to live as a human and actually living as one are different things altogether) – is instrumental in bringing about success in this endeavour.

But of course it is natural that the person in a leadership position must be the one who drives the human governance agenda. The adage that leadership is by example is truly brought into view in an organisation striving to bring back human governance. To true leaders, this should not be anything new.

So where do we leaders begin after re-activating our listening faculty? Simple: inside us.

Given that no two human beings are the same, and that everyone else is who they are, each one of us is just left to be ourselves. But do we really know the kind of person we are and what our nature is? To begin the human governance journey, leaders must start to make the practices of reflection and contemplation second nature. Leaders need to know their internal strengths

and weaknesses – they need to ascertain their appetite for change

and stamina in facing uncertainties and challenges. To put it succinctly, leaders must get their hands dirty – leaders must not be faint-hearted, since the road to bringing back a state of affairs based on the principles of human governance will not be without encumbrances.

Recognising the volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous nature of the real world, as highlighted in this column in March, is imperative. And because there are no established standards or procedures that leaders can use to manoeuvre along the journey, the approach becomes what we at PUTRA term a 'design and build' model. While it may appear to some that the journey to bring back human governance is arduous, we wish to reiterate that, based on our experi-

ence in initiating the agenda, it is doable. The scenario is similar to engineers constructing a building whose structure has never before been designed and is not yet documented. A reminder though: while the modality is similar, the experience will not be so. With human governance, we are referring to humans, who, unlike buildings, are not merely motion and matter.

Having noted this, rest assured that the rewards are aplenty – sincerity in giving one's best tops the list of things I look forward to from my fellow team members, with the rest – the culture of taking ownership for example – being consequential to this internal motivation. And above all, for human leaders, bringing back the human in all of us is only right.



**Professor Arfah Salleh** is the President & CEO of the Putra Business School at Universiti Putra Malaysia.