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It's Vision Twenty-Twenty, not Two Thousand Twenty

Datuk Salleh Majid

LAST week was again filled with interesting developments, locally and abroad. The new Selangor Menteri Besar was named, Mr John Major of the Conservatives had to leave office to make way for Labour's Mr Tony Blair after a crushing defeat of his party, Singapore was apologising again for being "factual" on Johor, Zairean rebel leader Laurent Kabila was concerned for his safety so he was a no-show for talks with President Mobutu and the local stock market finally recovered some ground for two days.

Also last week, the National Congress on Vision 2020 managed to gather some good ideas and suggestions to see through the implementation of the most important agenda of the nation.

A local newspaper that wanted to score a "we told you so" scoop went on to print the name of a senior exco member of Selangor who was supposedly to be sworn in as the Menteri Besar, only to find that their "candidate" was not the one officially announced.

If the candidate had read the front page of that newspaper that morning, he could have had a tough time trying to tame his biorhythm when the announcement was made.

A newspaper elsewhere wanted the last say on the crime rate in Johor, only to invite another round of criticism from the Malaysian media and politicians. They have since apologised (no sweat doing so) but have maintained that they only print facts. Sounds like the old story of the emperor who believed he had new clothes on. Let us wait for the next episode of Aesop's fables.

As for the 21-point and 17-point recovery of the KLSE Composite Index on Wednesday and Friday, apparently not everybody is happy. I received a phone call from a disgruntled investor who said I should not have said things which contributed to the market going up because he had wanted the market to go down somemore, before going in.

In a way I am flattered by the suggestion that what I said had lifted the market, but at the same time it reminded me of what I told participants of a seminar on share investment held in Sungei Petani, Kedah, last Saturday that the stock market is made up of human beings whose characters are so varied and diverse so much so it is futile to try to fathom their thinking.

Try to stick to the fundamentals. The companies by themselves have no reason to experience a decline in their share prices, there is nothing to prevent those which are making money to show good profits, only the market is a variable which is unpredictable. But then again, someone who sells short in anticipation of a continued declining market will also be annoyed if the market goes up!

The "Green Screen" on Wednesday brought a lot of smiles to the participants of the Vision 2020 National Congress. I guess for those who were involved in the market, that day made it easier for them to participate in the discussions. Each of the nine challenges had workshops to find the best ways to meet those challenges. And suggestions and ideas were aplenty.

As always, time available for discussions was short but the spirit in which it was held against the backdrop of participation of ministers, politicians, senior civil servants, academicians, captains of the industry and, of course, members of NGOs generated multi-dimensional perspective of

issues facing a nation in search of its own mould of a developed nation.

The easy part of gathering such a distinguished group of participants from all over the country is over and now comes the more difficult part of translating those invaluable ideas and suggestions into operational policies and guidelines to ensure success by the year 2020.

During the dialogue a participant informed Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad that a good majority of the population might have heard of Vision 2020 but might not know the details. In response, the Prime Minister said he himself sometimes cannot remember all the nine challenges.

He said he wanted the people to realise that Vision 2020 should be said as Vision Twenty-Twenty and not Two Thousand Twenty because of the fact if one has a perfect vision, it is called "20-20" vision. That itself has a very deep meaning - of being able to truly see the barriers to achieving the goal of being a competitive, developed nation.

It would seem everything stems from an upbringing that inculcates the right ethical and moral values - and upbringing depends on parents. It looks like effective programmes on early child development will be an integral component to ensure attainment of a number of the nine challenges. Given the increasing social problems, including greed, skills in good parenting seem like a necessity.

On the economic and environmental fronts, suggestions from Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz and Datuk Salleh Noor of the Malaysian Nature Society deserve a good hearing. Rafidah articulated for programmes incorporating targets and time-frames, with critical paths being drawn up to isolate slack variables where necessary.

Salleh cautioned everyone that transformation from one state of development to another will undoubtedly take its toll on the environment if measures of conservation are not sufficiently attended to.

He was quick to provide statistics on the declining state of the environment to support his argument. In fact, he suggested the protection of the environment as the 10th challenge. While others may want to see things happen, others may want to make things happen.

(This article reflects the writer's personal views)

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