

15/12/2002

Kedah Maju on course but planners must pay attention to detail

Ahmad A. Talib

THE Dewan Seri Negeri in the Wisma Darul Aman complex in Alor Star was full with invited guests and State dignitaries on Wednesday. In fact, I could see some men and women sitting on the floor of the hall, silently following the proceedings on the stage.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi was officiating at the first-year review of the Kedah Maju 2010 plan, a blueprint that aims to make Kedah a prosperous and developed State by the end of this decade. The review is by way of a two-day convention which started the day before.

Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain believes that Kedah Maju is the State's passport to better wealth creation and distribution, enabling the State to be at par with other, more developed ones along the west coast.

I also believe that the blueprint is one of Pak Tuan's vehicles to continued political leadership at the State. Abdullah's presence at the convention, and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's launching of the plan itself a year ago, should comfort Syed Razak in terms of the political backing he and the plan need.

But the test, really, is in the implementation. Over coffee the previous night, Syed Razak appeared very bullish about Kedah Maju. He may be justified in feeling so, and participants from the workshops at the convention came up with additional ideas and options for study in the months and years to come.

Syed Razak's predecessors must also be congratulated for having laid some of the foundation for Kedah Maju. It must be said that they had, during their time, put in place a foundation for which Syed Razak can improve upon.

It would perhaps be necessary and wise for Syed Razak to get the previous architects of Kedah's economic programmes more involved in Kedah Maju. This would show to the people that Kedah Maju has the undivided support of the State's (read Umno, particularly) political machinery.

The absence of key political players during the convention, especially at the opening, was quite obvious. I'm sure that the master planners behind Kedah Maju do not want to see their plans derailed or undermined by political forces who, for reasons best known to them, do not want to see the plan succeed.

It would be naive for the present planners to think that their best laid-out plans could succeed without the full and unstinting support of all sectors of the political machinery. Politics, as we all know it, can render the plans to nothing more than words and graphs.

The planners of Kedah Maju must also manage the increased expectation from the blueprint. Among others, the plan contains 110 development projects, and 29 are said to have been 50 per cent completed. They include the RM187 million Beris dam, the RM68 million resettlement scheme for 600 families affected by the dam and the Kuala Kedah fishermen resettlement scheme costing more than RM31 million.

Syed Razak cannot afford to have Kedah Maju fall short of its declared objectives. For the people of Kedah, successful implementation of the plans could make a difference in their quality of life; for Syed Razak, his political enemies will not hesitate to fry him should the plans fail.

The planners need to pay attention to details, no matter how small,

trivial or tedious they may appear to be. Imagine having have to strain one's ears to make out what the Deputy Prime Minister and the Menteri Besar were saying when addressing guests in the hall on Wednesday.

As for the closed-circuit television placed strategically outside the hall, the visual was good but the audio was missing. An unfriendly observer could conclude, and then pass the word around to extract political mileage, that if the planners can't get the audio properly