

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER AT THE
OPENING OF THE SEMINAR ON "THE ROLE OF
PUBLIC RELATIONS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE NEW ECONOMIC POLICY" AT DEWAN
TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN, KUALA LUMPUR
ON 8TH SEPTEMBER, 1972

Tuan Pengerusi, Y.B. Menteri-menteri, Para Peserta Seminar,
Saudara-saudara sekalian.

Terlebih dahulu sukalah saya menyatakan ucapan terimakasih kepada Jemaah Pentadbir Institute of Public Relations Malaysia kerana menjemput saya kemari dan diberi penghormatan merasmikan Seminar dua hari ini.

Seminar ini yang akan membincangkan masalah-masalah perhubungan awam dalam konteks Dasar Ekonomi Baru khususnya mengenai pelaksanaan Rancangan Malaysia Kedua sangat-sangatlah dialu-alukan. Dialog di antara peserta-peserta dari sektor awam dan swasta akan membolehkan kedua-dua pihak lebih memahami masalah-masalah yang mereka hadapi.

Pihak Kerajaan berharap hasil-hasil perbincangan Seminar ini akan meningkatkan lagi kecekapan dan kesan strateji dan tektik perhubungan awam terutama dalam pelaksanaan jangka panjang Dasar Ekonomi Baru dan pelaksanaan jangka pendek Rancangan Malaysia Kedua.

I am happy to be here today and to be given the honour of opening your Seminar on "The Role of Public Relations in the Implementation of the New Economic Policy".

It is of tremendous interest to me personally to know that your Seminar today and tomorrow will discuss the problems of communication within the context of the New Economic Policy, particularly with regard to the implementation of the Second Malaysia Plan.

I am glad to note that the public sector and the private sector are evenly represented at this Seminar. The dialogue will, I am sure, enable both to understand better the problems that each

encounters. But more important, the resultant exchange of views and experience will, I hope, produce a balanced picture of the problems facing this country in the public relations field.

The Government would welcome suggestions from this Seminar that would increase the efficiency and effectiveness of our public communication strategy and tactics, particularly in relation to the long-term implementation of the New Economic Policy and the short-term implementation of the Second Malaysia Plan.

With only three years to go, we are now at a crucial stage of the implementation of the Second Malaysia Plan, which is the most ambitious development plan yet undertaken by our country.

As I said in the Dewan Rakyat recently, the Second Malaysia Plan would be reviewed in the middle of next year, and I think your Seminar today, which could be a prelude to many more on the problems of communication, is timely.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have on numerous occasions emphasised the fact that the success of the New Economic Policy will determine our very survival as a nation. The various development projects now being implemented under the Second Malaysia Plan are intended to give our people of all races, especially the less fortunate or the have-nots, a better life and a new sense of purposeful endeavour with the aid of science and technology.

The primary task of public relations in terms of national endeavour is not only to inform but to get people to action. In this context, the Government attaches great importance to the role of public relations in making the objectives of the New Economic Policy, particularly with regard to the restructuring of our Malaysian Society, as fully and as widely understood by all sections of our multi-racial population.

People do not act or respond favourably to any idea unless they understand. And our people cannot be expected to understand our national objectives and aspirations and act accordingly, unless they are well-informed. This must surely call for effective communication.

An urgent problem facing us today is how to make public communication more effective so that Government policies and actions are well-understood and favourably accepted by all our people, with a view to persuading them to accept changes in their environment and adopt new attitudes to fit themselves in the new scheme of things.

You will agree with me that no matter how persuasive a message seems to be from the point of view of the communicating source, there is no guarantee that the message will have the desired effect.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For this reason, the task of informing the public cannot be left to the Government alone. Public communication, to be effective, must be the result of a concerted effort of both the Government and those non-government groups in our society, who are in position of leadership, particularly those involved in moulding public opinion and changing public attitudes.

I refer particularly to such groups as public relations practitioners and other mass communicators in the private sector, other professionals and professional institutions, and the non-government press, who must also play their part and contribute to the enlightenment of our public.

But effective communication has to go beyond just keeping the public informed of the reasons behind Government policy decisions. It has to go beyond the mere interpretation of Government policy in terms of its effects on the daily lives of our people. Most important, it must have an effective system of feedback.

The Government must be able to know the implications of each policy in terms of its social impact. The Government must be able to check its performance to see if it has not gone off the track. The Government must also be able to know public reactions, overt or covert.

When billions of dollars of public money are being spent, and the future of Malaysians at stake, we cannot afford to play a guessing game on our performance in the implementation of the New Economic Policy. Our communication must be able to produce adaptive behaviour. It must be able to help us constantly to refine our performance in the interest of our national survival.

For this reason, effective communication has become imperative in ensuring that the policy of restructuring our Malaysian society produces the desired results. You will immediately recognise this as not only a formidable but a highly professional challenge. And for this, we need all the specialist talent and help we can get. This is where public relations practitioners and other mass communicators can play their vital role in the national community by accepting an element of public service as an extension of their job.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Government is aware that the people, particularly the Malays and other Bumiputras, place high hopes on the New Economic Policy. But these hopes cannot be fully realised, without doubt and prejudice, unless there is widespread awareness throughout the nation, of the meaning and promise of the New Economic Policy, which is designed to benefit all our citizens.

We also realise that the success of the New Economic Policy rests as much on the attitudes and responses of our people as well as the implementors. It is in this connection that last month I launched the Gerakan Pembaharuan or the Reform Movement which calls on everyone—the padi farmers, the rubber smallholders, the inshore fishermen, the village headmen, government officials and planners—to adopt a new attitude and be fully motivated in performing their task.

It is important that planners and implementors should be fully briefed on conditions “on the ground” and place the people’s interest above all things. The Malaysian Centre for Development Studies is now making a pilot study on “The Attitudes and Aspirations of the Rural Population”. Further studies in depth will follow with the collaboration of other Ministries involved.

These studies would enable the Government to know with a measure of certainty the real attitudes of the rural population within the context of national development and consequently to formulate firm measures that might be necessary to change the attitudes and value system of the rural population along more progressive lines in order to enable them to work with greater vigour in pursuit of a more purposeful and richer life.

But this would give us at best only a partial view of current social attitudes toward the New Economic Policy. There is still an uneven recognition among our non-bumiputra population of the changes that are taking place generated by the New Economic Policy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It must be realised by all that great and far-reaching changes are taking place today to alter the character and quality of Malaysian life. These changes are being generated by a process of democratisation of our economic system. The private sector of our economy—and I include state-owned corporations within this sector—must recognise this fact and accordingly must gear its policies and operations to democratic ends.

The private sector must recognise now that it cannot operate in isolation, solely preoccupied with the business of manufacturing, selling and making profit. Under the New Economic Policy, the private sector is required to be an integral part of the new emerging economic structure. It is required to be an integral part of the national decision-making process. Investment for profit alone is no longer enough. The private sector must also become a major motivator of social change. Not in terms of changing public taste or habit in relation to products entirely, but in terms of creating new social values and habits calculated to move our multi-racial people to discover new forms of their common national identity.

We cannot, for instance, gloat over high per capita income figure which hides the existing fact of economic and social inequalities. As of this moment, our national identity is divided on racial basis into economic, occupational, locational, professional, and cultural areas, among other things. The private sector must help the Government in finding ways and means to make our national identity indivisible.

In this connection, the private sector must also voluntarily assume responsibility for non-corporate interests. Its corporate strategy must include recognition of the moral aspects of its strategic choice. Corporate management must be able to fit its own view of right and wrong with what society has a right to expect of business. It must be responsive to the needs of the new Malaysian society in the making.

The private sector will be judged not only on its management objectives to fit the national plan but also its positive contribution to the levelling of rural and urban economic and social differences.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There are vast and profitable opportunities waiting in the transformation of a predominantly traditional agrarian economy into an industrial-agricultural economy. And this transformation could be made with less social and political stress if industrial projects and enterprises were programmed to take full advantage of the great rural economic and social potentials that are still largely untapped.

This is where an imaginative and dynamic corporate management can exercise its public relations judgement in the planning of its policy and objectives and play a decisive role in the democratisation of our national economy.

What has to be remembered is that the old economic order is disappearing and a new economic order is taking shape before our eyes, and with this new economic order will emerge a new social order and a new set of ethical and moral values and standards to ensure social justice for all.

The Government is determined to see the gradual but systematic disappearance of economic and social differences between our rural and urban sectors. We want to bring urban patterns of life and values to the countryside. We want to make farming in this country a business, not a way of life. In short, we want to see the rise of a new kind of rural man, with a new and dynamic way of thinking and approach to life, proud of his new-found status as an equal citizen in a just society.

This is the new spirit of our time. This is the spirit which motivated the formulation of the New Economic Policy. And this is also the spirit which will carry us through to our cherished goal of economic equality and social justice.

Every stratum of our society must be urged to recognise this new spirit that is moving across our land and to seize upon the opportunities now being offered to improve the quality of life in this country.

This is an urgent communication problem of immediate relevance to determine the success of the Second Malaysia Plan, for without early widespread public recognition of this new spirit the Plan may very well fall behind target, creating fresh problems and delaying the course of the New Economic Policy.

This calls for a social engineering task of a high order, making effective communication the more urgent as we move toward the second half of the Second Malaysia Plan.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We in the Government are most interested to know your views, your assessments, your findings of the various communication problems in implementing the Second Malaysia Plan and restructuring our Malaysian society.

We will be interested to know how we can persuade the various segments of our multi-racial population to accept the challenges of the New Economic Policy. We will be interested to know whether the Government has done enough in putting across its message both to the general and specific publics concerning the fundamental aims behind the New Economic Policy.

We will be interested to know if there has been a communication failure or information gap in the federal-state-district-mukim-kampung link; between the political leadership, the planners and the implementors; between the bureaucrats and the technocrats; between the public and private sectors.

We will be interested to know whether there are still doubts and uncertainties in the private sector over the activities and aims of state-owned corporations; whether the private sector is fully aware of its new role in helping to restructure our Malaysian society; whether the non-Bumiputra segments of our population fully recognise the need for restructuring our society.

We will be interested to know, in view of the urgency of effective communication in the effort to restructure Malaysian society, whether there is any need for the setting up of a Communication Research Council to advise Government on communication problems and recommend their solution.

We need to know the answers because we cannot afford a failure in the Second Malaysia Plan, which is the first but most vital step along the road to economic equality and social justice for all our people.

Saudara-saudara sekalian,

Saya harap saya telah dapat menghuraikan sedikit sebanyak langkah-langkah yang perlu dijalankan dan peranan yang boleh dimainkan oleh pakar-pakar perhubungan awam dalam menjayakan pelaksanaan Dasar Ekonomi Baru sebagai yang terkandung dalam Rancangan Malaysia Kedua.

Sebagai yang telah saya tegaskan berulang kali, Rancangan Malaysia Kedua merupakan rancangan pembangunan yang terbesar pernah diusahakan bagi negara kita. Kejayaannya akan menentukan "survival" negara dan rakyat Malaysia di masa akan datang.

Bagaimana pun, saya yakin dengan penyertaan semua pihak yang berkenaan dan dengan kerjasama dan sumbangan oleh Institute of Public Relations Malaysia menerusi Seminar ini dan juga kegiatan-kegiatannya, Rancangan Malaysia Kedua akan mencapai matlamat-matlamatnya.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Having posed these questions for your consideration, I have now great pleasure in declaring your Seminar open and wishing it all the success it deserves.

Thank you.



Tun Abdul Razak bin Hussein dan Perdana Menteri Soviet Alexei Kosygin sedang menandatangani perjanjian kerjasama dalam bidang ekonomi, kebudayaan, sains dan teknologi pada 6hb Oktober, 1972 di Soviet Russia.

(Gambar Jabatan Penerangan Malaysia)