

ADDRESS BY THE PRIME MINISTER AT THE
FIRST TUN ABDUL RAZAK'S LECTURE SERIES
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It gives me a real pleasure to inaugurate these series of lectures organised by the Malaysian Society for Public Administration. I am grateful to MASPA for the honour they have done me by associating these lectures with my name.

As you all know, the objective of this lecture series is to promote a deeper understanding of the development philosophy, its processes and techniques, which are essential in guiding us in shaping the future destiny of our nation, and I sincerely hope that this programme will in great measure contribute towards the advancement of thinking on development planning in Malaysia.

It is my belief that the course for rapid development should not only be steered by able and skilful management but also motivated by clear and sound ideals distilled through extensive and intensive inquiries into the deeper meaning of development and progress. I am sure that this lecture series will provide an excellent forum for such inquiries so as to make the task of development and nation-building a practical requirement of modern life and also a rewarding endeavour in terms of sustaining our human civilization.

Malaysia, as we all know, is in a stage of development where the focus of our attention is not only on economic growth but more important on the nature of Malaysian society of the future. We can no longer consider planning and decision-making solely in terms of solving short-term problems but as deliberate and sustained effort to shape the destiny of this nation in accordance with the will and aspirations of our people. Thus while a good grasp of various approaches and techniques to development planning is essential for all our planners and development administrators, it is equally important that they should attain a greater awareness and vision of the long-term goals. This, therefore, calls for a continuous rethinking and reassessing of the nature and

objective of planning so that it does not become a mere intellectual exercise quite divorced from reality but rather a clear vision outlined in a blue-print for development.

One of the greatest problems of development planning involves the question of choice among many alternatives. I consider this as a very fundamental issue for us in view of the fact that there are now so many models for development that we can adapt and adopt. There seems to be no end to the sophistication of planning techniques from which we can draw some useful lessons and guidelines.

But such choice will continue to be determined by many factors ranging from the availability of scarce material and human resources to the almost unfathomable depth of human values and human motivations. While scarce resources, either material or human, are at least obvious and quantifiable, it is the more subtle issue of human values and predisposition that makes this choice a very intricate and difficult exercise. It is in respect of the latter that our planners and development administrators must not only be technically qualified but emotionally and morally committed to the higher ideals of the nation.

I would like to ponder over some of the critical areas of choice that we face today.

In the first instance there is always the age-old controversy as to whether we should remain a predominantly agricultural country or embark on a programme of rapid industrialisation in the more developed nations of the world. In the light of the current 33% contribution of the agricultural sector to our Gross Domestic Product, we are not really too dependent on agriculture although still predominantly so, especially since 49.5% of the labour force is employed in this sector. Should we, therefore, continue to move towards increasing our agricultural output so that it will contribute to a greater share of the GDP or should we sustain it at the present level and increase the output of other sectors, especially the industrial sector? What will be the consequences of either stepping up or slowing down agricultural production in terms of the employment pattern in this country, in terms of socio-economic relationships between the urban and rural sectors, and the working relationship between the various races in this country?

Secondly, there is a choice between rapid urbanization of the rural sector and the development of the rural sector according to its own norms and values as distinct from the urban sector. When we talk about rural urbanization it will be a mistake to think in terms of turning the rural areas into busy urban settlements with crowded shopping centres and roads perennially choked up with traffic. Surely we do not want this. We still want to maintain a green and lush countryside, with the invigorating serenity of the rural scene but also with beautiful and comfortable houses for the people who can enjoy all the facilities of modern life. The growth centres should only form the nucleus for rapid development in line with the major towns of Malaysia. Otherwise the countryside should retain its peaceful scenic beauty. This is to say that whilst we want rapid development in our rural areas, we should prevent the superimposition of urban forms over unchanged rural values for this can only bring about serious strains and disappointments.

A third probable area of choice in Malaysia is between the rapid attainment of economic wealth and the equitable distribution of wealth in order to create a happier people. In national planning we also sometimes face the choice of putting our hopes and resources in the economically more viable programme rather than the one whose returns are not easily quantifiable. Faced with such a choice it is only our awareness of the wider perspective and deeper meaning of development that can help us make the wiser decision.

Planning for national development therefore confronts us with many choices and alternatives. To analyse each and everyone of them to the last details before making a decision could be quite impossible because of limitations in time and information. More often than not planners and decision-makers have to use their intelligent guess and finer sense of judgement in charting out the lines of action which must be taken.

In such a situation, therefore, knowledge and skill in planning and the art of decision-making itself are not enough. The planners and decision-makers should not be thinking in terms of material and physical development alone but must keep in mind the fact that they are determining the future of a whole nation. They need to be really sincerely convinced of the desirability and importance of what they plan, and undertake the job with full devotion to the task of improving the quality of life of the people. Planning

is not and should not be treated as a professional game, an exercise in imaginative and intellectual brilliance. Rather, it should be a soul-searching exercise where the planner places his entire faith and conviction in the task undertaken.

I would say the same with regard to the implementors and the administrators and our people in general. The machinery for development planning and implementation in Malaysia allows for every administrator and citizen to take an active part at various levels in the process of planning and plan implementation. It is for this reason that we have development committees at various levels—at village level and action committees at district, state and national levels. These committees are to ensure full participation of the people and full opportunity of expressing their desires and interests.

But the fact remains that in deciding on the course of development to be followed there can be wide divergence of views and opinions. This is understandable and in fact a healthy situation in a democracy like ours but it can be disastrous if each differing party is blind to reason and is concerned only with its own selfish interest rather than achieving an amicable compromise and integration of interests. The basic need for such a compromise and integration is nothing achieve progress and prosperity in accordance with the will and aspirations of the people, and a full commitment to the course of development as chosen by the people through their legitimate representatives in the Government.

It is important to state here that ideas and thoughts can be acquired through proper training and wide experience. Sincerity and devotion, however, cannot be taught. They are self-nurtured through a genuine faith and love for the country and our fellow-citizens. Without them not only will our ideas and thoughts find difficulty in being accepted, but we will be untrue to the realities of our own existence.

Let me repeat, therefore, that for the purpose of making the best choice among various alternatives which confront us today in the process of development, the most important criteria will be our own sincerity and devotion to the cause of the nation. Without these two motivating factors no amount of sophistication in our planning will ensure peaceful progress and the harmonious development we so desire.

In the process of planning for the present and future development of Malaysia, we must also bear in mind that we should not allow the political and administrative dimensions of national development create any form of disequilibrium. Each must be aware of the limitation and constraints of the other and work in full trust and confidence of each other.

As I see it, the role of political leadership in development is primarily one of interest articulation and aggregation, the mastering of strong grassroot support, and the moulding of the people together into a progressive, stable and strong nation. We set the ideals and the broad guidelines in accordance with wishes of the people who elect us in office and whom we pledge to serve by the mandate they have given us.

Administrators and the development planners are of course the steel-framework of the Governmental administrative machinery. I have been a civil servant myself and I know that you have your own ideals and needs to satisfy, your own norms and standards based on a legal-rational criteria for action. However, the role of civil servants has changed tremendously over the years and the concept of an office-bound civil servant is no longer acceptable today. He needs to be an active agent of a change in the development process either as a planner, and implementor of both, and in being so he will have to identify himself very closely with the people.

To be effective in his new role the civil servant must not only have the necessary knowledge and skill but also flexible and generous. The application of the laws and implementation of plans without a sufficient sensitivity and understanding of the people's problem will not solve the complex issues of development. We have seen enough examples of misunderstanding and ill-will through a failure to read and understand the situation correctly. The overcoming of this problem is as important as planning itself; in fact no plan can be successfully implemented if the people do not understand its purpose and intention. As such, to be really understood one often has to imagine oneself in other person's shoe—appreciate his problems and his difficulties, his immediate worries and concerns, and the way his mind works. You need a big heart to do all these in order to achieve the desired results.

Nothing is more disastrous than to bulldoze a development programme though without the full understanding and support of

the people. This is indeed one aspect of planning that must necessarily go together with a good plan. No plan is good enough until it has reached the people and has received their acquiescence.

The process of identifying and understanding the problems and interests of the people represents one common area of concern for both the politicians and the administrators, side by side with explaining and getting the support of the people on the objectives of the plan. Once translated into action both the politician and the administrator must ensure the proper supply of material resources and funds, maintain a high degree of involvement and participation throughout the implementation stage, in order that the objectives of the plan are successfully achieved. Here again success should not be measured against physical completion only; it should be judged in terms of how much it has fulfilled the needs and aspirations of the people. In other words, the soul of the people—their satisfaction and happiness should remain the paramount consideration.

In conclusion, let me assure you Professor Martin Bronfenbrenner, in these brief remarks I had no intention of taking the wind out of your sail. What I wanted to emphasise is that while economic development is a very basic and significant step in national development, we must not forget that it is only a means towards a higher objective, i.e. of creating a better social order in which our people can enjoy a higher standard of living, peace and happiness.