

# "A DRIVE FOR GREATER PROGRESS"

## TURNING POINT REACHED IN DEVELOPMENT

*"A Drive For Greater Progress' was the theme at the National Agricultural Seminar held at MARA Auditorium in Kuala Lumpur on 18th April, 1968. The main problem involved in getting Malaysian agriculture to become a major factor in the modern world was explained at length by Tun Abdul Razak.*

As a result of our nation's efforts over the last ten years, we have made a break-through in the development of our country. We have now reached a *turning point*, particularly in the field of Agricultural Development.

This National Agricultural Seminar, ending to-day, marks the beginning of a new phase ushering in a greater awareness on the part of our people and our government, of the magnitude of the task that lies ahead of us.

Our present drive for progress must be concentrated to a greater extent on the agricultural sector of our economy, a drive for the greater utilisation of our land, a drive for the greater production of food-stuffs and a drive, not only to satisfy our own needs, but also a drive to take our rightful place in the markets of the world where exists a demand for the very crops we know full-well we can produce.

Let us consider how to get Malaysian agriculture to become a major factor in the modern world. I wish to confine myself to this problem to-day. Let us take the question of rice, the main crop of so many of our farmers. This very problem has been stated time and time again and many solutions have been offered to us. We are told that we should give up eating rice altogether; others propose that we continue to eat rice but change the farmer. None of us in Malaysia can seriously entertain the first proposal. Of all the areas of behaviour where change is most difficult, food tastes and food preferences lead the list. Modify our diet, yes. Provide new food alternatives so that these will be eaten in addition to rice, yes. The campaign therefore is not to stop eating rice, not to substitute rice, but to produce it.

## PROGRESS IN PAHANG



The Tun is driving a Euclid TS-7 self-propelled scraper when he inspected the progress of Padang Tengku Road, Kuala Lipis, Pahang, on 15th December, 1961.



Picture shows Tun Razak driving his speed boat during his tour of riverine kampongs along Pahang River to see the development projects on 16th December, 1961.

Rice is so "ingrained" in the psychology of our people that we cannot suggest eliminating it

It is precisely because it is so important to us that we have a constructive starting point to develop interest and involvement in producing more and better rice, more cheaply and efficiently.

A large sector of our farming is semi-subsistence, but I do not wish to imply that it is simple. It is very complex. And I do not wish to imply that our rice-farmers are simple-minded.

No! The kampong farmer who works on the most rudimentary level of farming has an enormous number of techniques to master and decisions to make. He has to think of soil and weather conditions. He has to select from available rice varieties those which he knows from experience will succeed or fail under certain conditions.

He knows that one paddy variety will do well when there is plenty of water. He knows that others will suffer with too much water. He knows this and much more!

Let us not make the mistake of assuming that we have to think for our farmers! To survive, they have had to think for themselves. There is no doubt in my mind that they are capable of making wise decisions.

*But to have our farmers accept the best of available technology, to make intelligent decisions about a modern market and other economic factors, and to participate more fully in the economic and social life of our country—they will have to learn to think differently. They will have to learn to make new kinds of decisions about their farming and way of life.*

This is why I asked the question the other day: "what do we have to extend" to them? This is why I ask: How fully have we thought the problems of getting our agricultural producers to move more rapidly?

We have been intensifying our research efforts to find new varieties producing better yields, better adapted to Malaysian conditions. We have been widening our efforts to determine which other crops lend themselves best to production in Malaysia—not only from the view-point of soils; but also from the view-point of economic advantage and acceptance by our farmers to plant such crops.

It is on this last point that we must focus most of our effort. Crops, after all, whether rice or maize or tapioca—are grown by

our farmers—not by Ministers, Members of Parliament or politicians or even by you!

It is the farmer who does the planting. It is he who must make the major decisions and who does the work. Our task is to provide him with the best available information, show him the best techniques, help make available the necessary necessities like selected seed, fertilizer and insecticide.

Finally, we must take these steps to ensure that he will be able to market his products at a fair price under favourable conditions.

Our drive to increase agricultural production and to get agriculture moving at a faster and more effective rate must focus on the farmer himself. There must be a meeting of minds!

From experience all-over the world, no amount of preaching about the importance of development, no amount of radio talks or leaflets or meetings on development will convince the farmer to change his practices. Why should he?

If I were a paddy planter with an acre of land on which my family depended. I would think twice about changing to a new variety of rice just because a Serdang graduate urged me to. I might try it in a corner of a field—or on a plot of poorer land where the risk is not so great. But I most certainly would not risk the well-being of my family by going all the way.

It would be irresponsible as a parent and family man and as an intelligent farmer.

I might be convinced, but my conviction would have to come from test, in my own mukim, with my fellow-farmers and relatives—and *seeing results* with my eyes. It would have to be on land much like my own—and not on the soil of some experiment station where all modern facilities are available.

Even if I were convinced, I would still have to face the problem of buying fertiliser, insecticide and perhaps even the new seed itself. In other words, being willing to try the new variety would not be enough. I would have to afford it. and all that goes with it.

It is all very well. Gentlemen, for us to talk about purchasable *inputs*, but farmers have to *pay out* for them.

What all this boils down to is the need for a comprehensive programme of agricultural development, embracing all the economic and social factors essential to development—and

involving all those other elements will speed the process. Let me briefly review some of these.

An active agricultural system requires adequate *transportation facilities*.

The results of our development plans speak for themselves. A national net-work of roads is well under way. Many kampongs are no longer in isolation. And even more areas will be opened up, allowing for an influx of necessary agricultural materials and an outflow of farm products.

We must give careful attention to our feeder-road system, re-evaluating priorities in terms of maximum gains. If our farmers are to move ahead, our plans for farm-to-market roads must be effectively carried out. Nevertheless, the general situation to-day can be regarded as good.

Malaysia has taken several major steps towards developing a modern farm technology. Extensive irrigation systems are close to completion. New varieties of paddy have been introduced and farmer response is encouraging. This process takes time and will not occur over-night.

The first tractor-training centres have been opened. Production of some crops is marked by a number of technologically advanced practices. In other words many of our farmers are becoming aware of new alternatives in farm practices. The major problem is to get *all of them* involved.

In getting involved, our farmers must have access to the necessary supplies and equipment and at least for the present, fertilizer and other supplies are equal to the demand. But availability is not enough.

The idea of using fertilizer on paddy fields is still very foreign and it will take time and effort to get our farmers to take advantage of its benefits.

Thus, the *price* of inputs and the question of the stability of the prices of farm products must be considered very carefully and, wherever necessary, appropriate action should be taken.

No amount of available inputs will solve this problem of farmer use. We must provide the incentives for production. These incentives are extra fuel, as it were, to get our farmers moving.

And production incentives cannot be separated from marketing and credit for the farmer. The expanding role of FAMA is one

example of facing up to the marketing problem, but we cannot expect it to do wonders. The marketing of farm products must be the concern of other people as well—agricultural officers, officers in MARA and Ministries like Commerce and Industry.

Our best and most careful thinking will be required here. The record of failures in other countries due to lack of planning and proper implementation is high and we do not intend to repeat this. We must make certain that those connected with agricultural production will work together to improve the marketing system so that our farmers will get fair prices for their out-put. An effective credit and marketing system, however, means not only well-laid plans and programmes. It will require the confidence of our farmers in it: it requires our confidence in our farmers. This is a matter of *mutual obligation*.

We can obtain this confidence with a sound credit programme offering *reasonable rates of interest*. This is essential for development.

Production incentives, credit and an effective marketing system—in other words, an agricultural infrastructure—are meaningless unless our farmers are totally involved, both as individuals on their farms and as members of dynamic farm organizations, concerned with day-to-day and seasonal activities that deal directly with farm problems. Farmers' associations are a healthy step in this direction.

But the growth of farmers' associations and the development of an effective extension service to work with them have been seriously handicapped by a shortage of trained personnel, technically competent to deal with farmers in their terms.

I cannot over-emphasise the seriousness of this problem. It will be with us for some time. You just cannot take too many short-cuts in developing competence. Sending out raw, unskilled extension workers will do more harm than good. It will undermine farmer confidence in government *and in modern technology*.

It is not a matter of extension services alone. After all, you *need something to extend*. We need a corps of trained personnel, fully equipped to carry out basic agricultural research, regional and local testing of their findings, as well as discovering better ways of getting useful findings to our farmers *so that they will use them*.

International research centres are proving their value to Malaysia and the rest of the agricultural world. But make no mistake here. We cannot rely on their work alone.

We need a sound agricultural research institute, oriented to Malaysian problems—asking "What is relevant to Malaysian agriculture?" "What is relevant to Terengganu, to Perak, to Johore?" And it must work in short-range terms as well as long ones. A problem-oriented science does not need decades to make the kind of progress we need here.

We must face up to the immediate problems of manpower shortage, both for research and extension. I include the two here because research findings are meaningless unless they are put to social use.

How are we meeting this particular problem? The first steps for the founding of a Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute have been taken. A national committee has been set up to deal with the questions of integration extension in our rural communities. A special committee to assess the problems of agricultural education has been set up.

We are resolved to see these problems through to their logical conclusion—taking all feasible and appropriate measures to eliminate weaknesses, to strengthen known resources, and to institute those measures necessary to earn out the job of agricultural development.

Gentlemen, I have reviewed those factors which play a major part in the broad mosaic of agricultural development. Each of them is necessary. The picture is incomplete if *any one of them* is missing. We need all of them if we are to achieve what we want for our people and what our people want for themselves and from us.

I am fully convinced that if we really do our part thoroughly and wisely and well, we will see in Malaysia an agricultural sector characterised by self-reliance of our farmers engaged in successful agriculture, confident of the necessary support from a government committed to development.

This takes planning. This means sound action. It cannot take place simultaneously in all sections of the country. After all, there are some areas more suitable for agriculture than others. There are some areas where our physical infrastructure has been more

fully developed. There are some areas where farmers have demonstrated a greater readiness to use modern techniques as well as they can.

There is another side to this coin. Our resources of trained manpower are far from adequate and we cannot afford to dilute this scarce resource. We just cannot do all that we would in all places at the same time.

Even if we were able to do so, it is doubtful that this would be the wisest course.

We must advance on a *two-pronged attack on agriculture*. The first line of advance is a *sustained and comprehensive programme* of agricultural development activities. We will concentrate on agricultural areas where the land and water resources are favourable for rapid and tangible improvement, where the physical infrastructure already permits rapid construction.

This is our first line of advance. Such a programme will not only have visible impact upon the area in a relatively short time, it will have a radiating influence beyond the area itself.

This brings us to the second pan of the two-pronged attack—our second line of advance.

We will continue all aims of our Plan in those remaining areas to prepare for concentrated effort. This means building key sectors of the transportation system, improving the land base wherever needed and possible, provided those other social and economic amenities not yet realised. All of the agencies involved in adult education and extension work will require a greater integrated effort, oriented towards preparing these sectors of our rural population for accelerated development.

We will give each area the *special* attention it deserves. The essence of my position should be clear.

The two-pronged attack on agricultural development is:

1. A concentrated and integrated programme designed to meet the needs of more rapid development in areas that are ready for take-off;
2. A programme of continuity in other areas, much along the lines indicated by our national development plan, but directed towards preparing these areas for accelerated agricultural development.

This two-pronged attack will succeed only by a joint effort by government on the one hand and farmers on the other. It means *one single, effective force* moving towards a more responsible agriculture, in which the farmers will be active participants in the economic life of the nation.

What is the difference between a "by-stander" and *a really active participant*?

The by-stander is passive. He waits for something to happen. The active participant makes things happen both by his own efforts and by working with others. He acts positively and makes full use of the resources available to him. He adapts himself to changing needs. He has the determination to exert himself and what is more he has the right and only spirit which I call JAYADIRI.

This spirit of JAYADIRI infused in our people and in our government officers, will be the moving force to propel us towards even greater achievements in development!

## A NEW CONCEPT FOR SUCCESS

### TEAM-WORK BETWEEN GOVERNMENT OFFICERS AND FARMERS URGED

*Delegates attending the National Seminar on Agriculture on 15th April, 1968, in Kuala Lumpur, were told by Tun Abdul Razak that "the time has now come for the **nation** to move into a more intensified phase of Agricultural Development. The main points of his speech were:*

The aim of this seminar is to create a new and more dynamic orientation and deeper understanding of our national economic policies *with particular regard* to Agriculture Development. I hope that as a result of this Seminar, you, as government officers, will be better equipped both individually and as a team to implement our agricultural Development Programme with greater effectiveness and efficiency.

The infrastructure for progress in the industrial and agricultural sectors has already been soundly laid.