

MALAYSIA'S THREE MAJOR PROBLEMS AND THE AGENDA FOR ACTION

In introducing the Development Estimates for 1969 totalling \$889.446354, in the Dewan Ra'ayat on Monday, 3rd February, 1969, Tun Abdul Razak listed three major problems which confronted the nation during the past three years. The problems were: First, the sharp drop in the price of rubber to 43J cents in February, 1968; Second, Britain's decision to withdraw troops from Malaysia and Singapore by 1971 and, Third, external assistance to finance the Five-Year Plan had fallen short of expectations. In the course of the following speech Tun Razak stressed "the Government is resolved to redouble its efforts in all directions" and he concluded his remarks thus; "This is the Agenda for Action this year and in the years to come"

In presenting the Development Estimates for this, the fourth year of the current Plan, I am very glad indeed that Hon'ble Members also have before them the Report on the Mid-Term Review of the Plan. This Report is a most comprehensive survey of the performance of the economy during the last three years. It is a painstaking attempt to assess the achievements against the original Plan targets—and come to grips with our current problems of development. It also takes a close look at our prospects for 1969, 1970 and the years beyond. For the first time, too, this document is being published simultaneously in the National Language. This is done not only to implement Government's language policy but also because we believe it to be important that more and more people, from every walk of life, gain better appreciation of the intricate inner workings of the Malaysian economy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we never consider the publication of a neatly-bound volume as an end in itself. We have always stressed and demanded results. Results are not achieved if we decide on a plan and then leave it at that for years before we review and assess our policies and plans. In fact, the Plan has been reviewed repeatedly and adjusted to meet changing circumstances and new high priority needs as they have emerged. It would be a great mistake indeed if a Plan, so well intentioned and carefully formulated, were to

be inflexible and rigid. This has certainly not been the case since our foremost concern is to increase the income and welfare of our people.

Mr Speaker. Sir, the record of the past three years presented in this volume is very encouraging. I would describe it as creditable and even impressive. We, the Alliance Government, can justifiably be proud of the record of the progress made. In many respects the achievements exceeded Plan targets. If Hon'ble Members will ponder for a moment the difficult circumstances and complex problems which have confronted us they will be doubly impressed with what we have achieved. I feel it is very necessary for Hon'ble Members to appreciate fully the problems and pitfalls of planning in an open and free enterprise economy such as ours. If this is understood then our debate will be more productive.

What problems confronted us during 1966-68? There were three major difficulties:

(a) Firstly, we experienced a sharp decline in the price of rubber which dropped to 43.5 cents in February, 1968. This was the lowest level since 1949 and represented a far steeper and earlier decline than anticipated in the Plan, which assumed a gradual M to 55 cents by 1970. A decline of this magnitude, coming so early in the Plan period, seriously affected Government revenue **and** expenditure as well as private investment and the overall performance of the economy. The price of other major exports such as tin and palm oil also declined more than originally envisaged particularly palm oil which dropped to an average price of \$44 in 1968 as against the plan assumption of \$580 per ton.

(b) The second adverse factor was not at all foreseen at the time the Plan was formulated. This was the decision of the British Government to withdraw its troops from Malaysia and Singapore by 1971. This announcement was soon followed by actual rundown of troops in East Malaysia when "Confrontation" ended. Apart from the need to fill the vacuum and man the installations, m airfields and forward bases. Malaysia stands to lose an importall source of foreign exchange earnings and employment opportunity

It affects us immediately as it is necessary to allocate a lata proportion of the available resources to further equip, train strengthen our defence capability and our state of preparedness We must be prepared to defend ourselves if we are to continue to survive and prosper.

As I informed the House recently, the Philippines has on several occasions violated our air space. It has also encouraged clandestine organisations to create trouble in Sabah and trained Commandos at a secret island base for an onslaught on our territory. Communist-inspired elements from within and along our borders in the north and in Sarawak are increasing their acts of subversion and threats to lives of peace-loving and innocent men.

(c) Finally, the quantity of external assistance received to help finance the Plan has fallen short of expectations. We had set a five-year target of \$1,900 million to be obtained from abroad as loans and grants. Our creditworthiness is strong and we can fully justify foreign borrowing of much more than this amount. But the amounts actually made available to us for such borrowing have been disappointingly low despite vigorous efforts on our part to accommodate ourselves to every feature of the aid programmes and to the individual styles of donor countries.

This shortfall arises partly from the nature of the aid offered to us—which is mostly tied to purchases from the donor country concerned—and partly from the nature of the Malaysian economy, which is basically agricultural and offers few projects with a sizeable component of foreign expenditure to be made in a single donor country. It has proven difficult to match aid offers to purchases in foreign currency, simply because most of the high priority projects in the Plan are for land development, drainage schemes, school buildings, agricultural research, extension and so on which require few, if any, imported items of equipment.

Although over \$500 million have been offered under various terms and conditions, it will be difficult for us to absorb the amount fully unless there is a radical change in the aid policies of donor countries. We had therefore to rely more and more on our own resources. Fortunately this has been possible. Domestic borrowing in the last three years had been stepped up to reach the Plan target. We had also to supplement domestic borrowing with loans from the international capital market. But with the scarcity of capital generally and the economic and balance of payments problems faced by several developed countries, our success in raising the projected amount has been somewhat limited.

Mr Speaker. Sir, this then is the background against which the record of the last three years should be appraised. It was a period of some concern and uncertainty. But no effort was spared to

implement the Plan as scheduled. The level of development expenditure was maintained while standards of public services remained high. As my colleague, the Hon'ble Minister of Finance, pointed out recently, the basic feature of the Malaysian economy lies in its strength and resilience. The sharp decline in the price of our major exports was fortunately offset by substantial gains in the volume of output and exports, particularly in the case of logs, sawn timber and palm oil. State Governments and public authorities were also able to finance much more from their own resources than originally thought possible. The amount of domestic borrowing was stepped up and there is still scope for additional financing from this source without affecting private investment and consumption.

In short, we have seen the nation respond positively to circumstances which were quite beyond our control. It is a record of which we can all be proud.

Mr Speaker. Sir. how did we fare in these circumstances? During 1966-68 the Malaysian economy grew by 6.7% per annum at constant prices. This is 2.2 percentage points higher than the rate envisaged in the Plan and 0.5 percentage points higher than the rate achieved in 1961-65. when conditions were more favourable and there were no financial difficulties. At current prices, the value of output grew by only 5% per annum, but this is still 0.6% higher than the rate anticipated in the Plan. Total real income accruing to Malaysia grew by an average of 4.1% a year in 1966-68. After providing for the annual population increase of 3%. real per capita income grew by over 1% per annum, which is twice as much as was projected in the Plan. A higher rate of growth would have indeed been achieved had it not been for the sharp decline in the price of our major export products.

There are other indicators by which the progress made during these years can be seen. The basic aim of the Plan—to increasing diversify the economy—has been advanced dramatically given the short time on which this objective has been actively pursued. Besides being the world's largest and most efficient producer of natural rubber and tin. Malaysia is now the largest exporter of palm oil. We are probably also the world's leading source of tropical hardwoods and the second largest producer of pepper.

We have pioneered revolutionary- new processing and presentation methods for natural rubber. This is the major breakthrough of the decade, comparable to the gains made through rubber 11 planting in the 1950s. We recorded significant increases in the

volume of fish landed and are already exporting to high income markets marine products such as fish and prawns. We are also self-sufficient in poultry and eggs. Major irrigation projects for double cropping of rice are now being implemented and, with the introduction of new padi varieties with higher yields, Malaysia will be close to self-sufficiency in rice in the early 1970s.

Our exports of logs and sawn timber have increased tremendously in a short period. We are increasing the large-scale cultivation of such annual crops as tapioca and maize, also with the export market in prospect. These and others to come will broaden the base of our agricultural production and bring more prosperity to the country. Manufacturing, which continued to record a high rate of growth, now accounts for over 11% of GNP compared to 8.7% in 1960. In the early stage, the strategy for industrial development was keyed towards replacement of imports. This is a relatively easy phase—convening importers and traders into industrialists. Now and in the future, we require more risk takers and entrepreneurs who can brace themselves and meet the real challenge of winning markets overseas.

The Alliance Government's economic policy of permitting private initiative and competition to provide the increases in production and employment opportunities that the nation requires has proven to be sound. And I have no doubt that the private sector will continue to support the Government in this effort as they have done in the past. There is a need to ensure a closer dialogue and exchange of views between the Government and the private sector. The recent exchange of views on development with the private sector has proved extremely useful and I will ensure that these consultations will take place more frequently in the future.

In this task, too, we have encouraged the growth of healthy and progressive employer and employee relations—because such relationship is vital to an understanding of the difficult and complex task of development and nation-building. I am glad that we have in Malaysia trade unions and their leaders who appreciate and understand their role and have acted responsibly.

To assist agriculture and industry attain better performance and increase economic and social well-being, we have in this period further expanded the basic infrastructure facilities.

- We have built new trunk roads and improved existing ones to open up land for settlement and provide improved access to major centres of population. The major expansion has been in East

Malaysia along the West Coast of Sabah and Sarawak and around Sandakan and Tawau where several agricultural schemes have been started

- * We have invested considerable sums to expand port facilities at Butterworth and Port Swettenham and will do so soon at Kuching, Kota Kinahalu and Sandakan as well. These improved ports will provide efficient and low cost transport that will benefit consumers, exporters and merchants.
- We have installed sufficient power capacity to meet the growing demand of industry, the housing boom and the appliance revolution. Extension of rural electrification to many kampongs and villages has been progressively made.
- * We have built numerous schools in urban and rural areas to fulfill Government's pledge to provide a place for every child of school-going age. The standard of buildings equipment, laboratories workshops and other facilities has been improved, and a more diversified curriculum devised to enable the education system to produce young men and women who can be absorbed by industry with little additional training. More and more emphasis been given to vocational, technical and scientific education as well as to teacher training programmes in these areas.
- We have constructed hospitals, clinics and health centres in various parts of the country. Over 12,800 units low-cost houses were built for the benefit of the lower income groups particularly in the more congested areas. In rural areas we have extended amenities previously obtainable only in the towns so that the people in the rural areas too can enjoy these benefits.

The one area in which achievement has been short of Plan; targets is in employment. The Plan had hoped to reduce the rate of unemployment by 1970. Though precise data are not yet available. it does seem that, despite sizeable growth in output in almost all sectors of the economy, the target for new job opportunities was not realised. Unemployment is now estimated to be in the region of 6.8% but rates are much higher amongst young school-leavers, particularly in the urban areas. The nature of output growth itself appears to have contributed to the slower rate of employment growth. The significant expansion of manufacturing output was associated largely with increased labour productivity rather than more men employed.

In the field of agriculture, the progress in diversification, particularly the increasing planting of oil palm, and productivity improvements in the rubber industry. had led to less people being employed in the estate sector. In the smallholder and padi planted sectors, development has probably alleviated underemployment and provided greater incomes rather than created net

employment opportunities. Shortfalls in private sector land development also resulted in the slower growth of employment in agriculture. But we have recently, in consultation with the State Governments, taken measures to speed up the process of land alienation. We have also assured the private sector that if they wish to invest in agricultural development, we will do everything possible to assist them in obtaining land.

Mr Speaker Sir, ever since Merdeka, the Alliance Government has consciously promoted development for the benefit of every member of our society. Our success in raising living standards results largely from the active public support and co-operation of the people whom we have pledged to serve.

There is also abundant evidence of the growing feeling of national consciousness: a true Malaysian has his heart and faith in this country and he wants to play his part in building a strong and vigorous nation. I am most encouraged at the evidence that this consciousness, this pride in being a Malaysian, is strong and has been demonstrated in all our towns and villages—from Kuala Lumpur, Kuching and Kota Kinabalu to Segamat, Sibul and Sempurna—where the old and young alike show their loyalty and determination to fight for the defence of the country when we are threatened.

We need fear no charges of discrimination nor do we ask to be judged on anything other than our record of fairness and accomplishment. A Government dedicated to the service of the people and work for the good of the nation can stand up to any criticism and meet any challenge.

Mr Speaker. Sir. we are far from complacent. The agenda of development in the years to come is still full and exciting. We welcome the challenge and the opportunity to serve our people better. I am confident that a better life for all can be achieved within the present generation but we must act now. This is the message of the Development Budget and the Mid-Term Review before this House.

As Honourable Members will notice, the allocation for this year amounts to S889 million, as compared to estimated expenditure of \$630 million in 1968. This refers only to expenditures by the Federal Government and does not reflect the investments of State Governments and public authorities, which have been able to finance much more than previously expected, especially Sabah

and the NEB. Steps have been taken to ensure that the provisions allocated to Ministries Departments and the States especially in Sabah and Sarawak are utilised more fully in We thus expect the level of development expenditure to pick up further and attain the revised Plan targets by 1970.

The 1969 Development Estimates also include funds for carrying out some new projects of high priority emerging from the Review of the Plan as well as revisions to the estimated costs of **projects**. The full implementation of several of these **projects** will spill over into the Second Malaysia Plan period. In other words, the provisions are designed to enable the necessary feasibility studies to be completed and a pipeline of well-prepared projects to be available for inclusion in the next Plan.

Mr Speaker. Sir, as the Honourable Members reflect on the issues I have discussed and on the progress made, as well as the tasks ahead, we resolve to redouble our efforts in these directions:

- (i) We will pursue with vigour the development of agricultural land in both west and East Malaysia. The vast substantial land resource we have must be utilised fully for economic and social advancement. We need to provide jobs to our young men and women and increase our agricultural production. This policy requires the close co-operation of State Governments and the private sector to allocate suitable land and invest the necessary capital. We *must* strive towards a rapid transformation of Malaysia's agricultural production into a more diversified pattern to meet both intimate and external markets.
- (ii) we will strengthen—with greater drive and energy, time and resources agricultural research which must precede any meaningful development in agriculture. The MARDI (Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute) Bill already before this House reflects this urgency. Once MARDI is established it will be staffed with men who possess the necessary skills and experience to provide leadership in the various research disciplines. It will intensify research, with a view to promoting at least one or two new major crops to increase the income and employment in the country.
- (iii) The acreage of rubber will be expanded to areas where this crop can be grown. We have every confidence in the ability of Malaysian natural rubber to increase its share in total world demand against the strong competition from synthetics. Our assurance lies in our ability to supply the rubber needed at competitive prices. Rubber smallholders will continue to receive assistance to replant high yielding material. The 1969 Budget provides sufficient funds to accelerate the rate of replanting. The benefits of the new crumb processing methods developed by the RRI and private estates will be extended to smallholders on existing rubber land and in land.

development schemes. Smallholders served by the first of the processing schemes are already gaining by the better quality and price they can get.

(iv) We will establish a national agricultural credit institution to meet the needs of farmers and other producers for short and medium-term capital. This is only the first part, although an important part of the package of measures that we are developing for the agricultural sector and is essential if the farmers are to be able to purchase the necessary fertilisers, pesticides and farm equipment to improve their productivity and income.

(v) We will expand and seek new markets for our major products. **Particularly palm oil** in which more aggressive sales and promotional measures are needed. Our steadily growing ties with some of the East European countries provide an important new market to be developed. At home more research is needed in product utilisation to find new uses of this raw material.

(vi) **We are concerned over continuing problems of unemployment and are conscious that, while the problem will be overcome in the long run through sustained economic development, measures need to be taken to meet the problem in the immediate term. We will, as I have already stated, accelerate the process of land development, under Federal and State schemes and through private sector efforts. More expeditious land alienation and fuller use of alienated land, cost reductions in on-going public sector land schemes and innovations in such schemes, are already receiving priority attention. Youth land schemes are being tried out in some States and every assistance will be given to States in stepping up the size and number of such projects, as a useful supplement to FLDA and other schemes. We will make special efforts to promote labour intensive industries such as wood working and agro-based industries, through appropriate fiscal and other measures. We will endeavour, wherever feasible, to use our abundant labour resources in large-scale public works programmes, including flood control and land clearing. Finally, we propose to increase public development expenditure from the levels of earlier years, not merely to enable the execution of higher productive economic projects but also to bring about a faster rate of employment growth.**

(vii) A *review of the structure* of education will be undertaken to ensure that educational output is closely geared to the long-term manpower demand, today we still lack the professional, technical and middle level manpower needed for rapid industrial and a cultural modernisation. There is still too much emphasis on white collar jobs. The attitudes of parents and pupils should be re-oriented towards work opportunities in blue collar jobs and in agriculture. Adequate numbers of teachers in the vocational and technical subjects will be provided and the efforts of the various training institutions will be better co-ordinated with the training programmes of industry to achieve greater and quicker results.

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- (viii) We will pay special attention to the development of regions faced with special economic problems such as Penang and Malacca. Other areas which show considerable potential as in Southern Pahang, Johore, the East Coast States and in East Malaysia will also be developed on a regional basis. During this year we will embark on a detailed feasibility study of the new East-West Highway which will be an important stimulus to the development of the Penang region as well as Kelantan, Terengganu and Central Perak.
- (ix) We will continue to *modernise and upgrade the level of performance in the public service* through post entry training and the introduction of modern management and financial techniques in Government. What we seek is greater economy, efficiency and progress. Further improvements and innovations will be introduced in planning techniques and organisation. We will need to have more officers conversant with economic analysis in the professional sense. In this connection active consideration is being given to the creation within the Government of a nucleus of an economic service.
- (x) Finally, the defence and security programme will be mapped out in close co-operation with our neighbours and partners in the Commonwealth—U.K., Australia, New Zealand and Singapore. We need this co-operation not just for security reasons—the need to use increasingly sophisticated weapons systems for our own defence—but also for economic and social reasons. By obtaining military assistance and co-operation from our friends and neighbours we can minimise the tendency of security needs to draw off resources needed for development. Our allies appreciate this link. They fully realise that our security and that of the entire region of South East Asia depend in large part on seeing that our development efforts are not slowed down.

Mr Speaker. Sir, this then is our Agenda for Action this year and in the years to come. We will not be deterred because the list is long and the problems difficult. We will press on with the programmes I have outlined with vigour and determination so that the country may continue to progress and prosper. The Alliance Government has demonstrated that we are a progressive government fully committed to meeting the needs and aspirations of our people. The three-year implementation of our First Malaysia Plan has enabled all of us to progress further towards prosperity and put Malaysia high on the map and in its rightful place among the nations of the world.

We are a democratic government elected by the people, and we work for the people. We are a nation comprising people of many races, many cultures and religions, living in close harmony and tolerance in thirteen component States. Our fundamental objective

in the Plan is to promote the integration of the peoples and States of Malaysia and to build a more united, secure and prosperous nation. We, the Alliance Government, are proud to have been given the privilege and the honour by the people of leading our nation towards the fulfilment of this objective. Mr Speaker, Sir, we have achieved impressive results and success in this task of nation-building. I have no doubt that the electorate and the people will once again exercise their rightful prerogative by returning the Alliance Government which has served, and will continue to serve, the people well. Then, together, we will continue our great work of welding our various races and States into a more stable, progressive and happy Malaysia.

Mr Speaker. Sir. ever since Merdeka when we took over the reins of Government, we have successfully achieved an increase in the level of income and a steady narrowing of the gap between the "haves" and "have nots". Every loyal citizen irrespective of race, culture or creed, will have a rightful place under the sun in the Malaysian nation.

We have the basic assets—sound democratic government, vast human and natural resources and strength and resilience of the economy—to develop more rapidly in unity and economic progress. Our policy is to strive for equality of economic opportunity for all Malaysians. Government's efforts will be concentrated on the people and states whose needs and potential are greatest. In this connection, the relatively under-developed States of East Malaysia and the East Coast of West Malaysia will continue to receive priority attention. Considerable expansion has taken place in East Malaysia in the fields of transport, communications, electricity and water supply systems. And Government will ensure that the already high level of social and community services will continue to be provided.

Mr Speaker. Sir. our people in East Malaysia have clearly demonstrated that they are solidly behind the Government in the task of development and nation-building. Despite the troubles in Sabah as a result of the claim raised by the Philippines, the people of Sabah and Sarawak are undeterred in their determination to overcome external threats and internal subversion. Such national unity and solidarity are the most important ingredients for ensuring development and growth.

Our work in nation-building and in protecting our national sovereignty and integrity will not slacken. Looking back on the

progress achieved we can justifiably draw satisfaction and comfort from the efforts made. But we can assure Hon'ble Members and the people that the Alliance Government will not be complacent. We will intensify our developments efforts so that Malaysia will continue to progress and prosper. We will continue with our avowed policy of maintaining racial harmony, goodwill and fairness to all. With this policy and with our intensified economic development efforts we are convinced, given the support and mandate by the people, that we will ensure a rightful place in our country for everyone of our citizens, young and old, of various racial origins. We are determined to ensure that they will have a standard of living in a decent and modern society, and a bright, happy and contented future.

Sir. I beg to move.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

Malaysia's goals are to provide enlarged and equal opportunities for all. The framework is democratic action with the Government giving the lead and a helping hand in the process of modernisation. What kind of transformation do we want to see in the lives of our people? We want them and their sons to have lively, inquiring, individual minds, each man using his own intelligence and energies to improve his lot. We don't want to place them into a rigid mould of centrally planned economic development. We want them to live their own individual lives as part of the process of betterment with human dignity and free from the state of regimentation, fear and suspicion.

— *Tun Razak*