

SPEECH BY THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
AND MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT
ON THE LAUNCHING OF THE SECOND PHASE
OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME, AT
THE NEW RURAL DEVELOPMENT OPERATION
ROOM, KUALA LUMPUR ON 4TH SEPTEMBER,
1961

Gentlemen, I am extremely grateful to you for coming to this Press Conference today. I am also grateful to the Press for the sustained interest and stimulus which you have given to our National Rural Development Programme since this was launched two years ago.

I should like to explain to you, once again, the reasoning behind the planning of our National Rural Development Programme and why I decided to launch the programme in phases.

The Alliance Government had decided to give rural development top priority in all its programmes as it is determined to give rural people a fair deal to remove the economic imbalances that exist between the rural and the urban people, and to give the rural people full opportunities for development and progress.

With the achievement of Merdeka and the establishment of political democracy in this country, it is necessary that there should also be economic democracy. Economic democracy means the good things of life must be made available to more and more people and gross inequality and imbalances should be removed. The less fortunate people in the rural areas must be given certain essential economic needs which will give them a chance to develop their creative faculties and give them a better and higher standard of living. The Alliance Government is determined to make this programme a success.

I have also decided that this National Programme should be divided into phases, and each phase is so timed to take place at different periods throughout the period of the Five-Year Plan so that each phase, when launched, will run in parallel and concurrent with other phases already on the way.

We, in Malaya, have an elected and democratic Government; it is therefore only correct that in the first phase of our Rural Development Plan the Government should first and foremost shoulder this whole responsibility in providing the rural people with certain essential amenities. By doing, this, the Government is laying the framework of development.

If in the past, before our National Rural Development programme was launched—although various projects were put forward by Government for the benefit of the rural people—rural people did not in the fact get the best of what could have been given to them by Government. This is because there was no real co-ordination of Government activities at all levels for the purpose of achieving the maximum development in the rural areas. There was no Master Plan. There was not a sufficient combined directive control at the top to ensure that Government in the rural areas functioned as an efficient machine manned by a purposeful single-minded team driven towards their goal and ideal that of rural development. There was also insufficient day-to-day co-ordination between Government departments and Government officers on the ground due mostly to lack of understanding of each other's tasks. In other words, there were too many ties of pulling at cross purposes and sometimes leading to nowhere.

It was, therefore, our first task in the launching of our National Rural Development Plan to gear Government machinery to this national programme, and to effect co-ordination at all levels with a Master Plan to achieve the maximum results.

With the launching of the "Red Book" and the application of the spirit and the principles contained in it, and as a result of my extensive tours throughout the country, to every State and District, I can now say, admittedly with modesty, that the Government has remedied many of the defects in its structure which we inherited from pre-Merdeka days.

In other words, the aim of phase one of our Rural Development Programme, a phase that will continue throughout the whole period of the Five-Year Plan, was:

- (a) To get all Government departments working together as a team at Federal, State and District level;

- (b) To produce a definite plan for each State and District; these plans to be co-ordinated into the National Five-Year Plan;
- (c) To streamline the system of land alienation in order to make the most use of available land staff, surveyors, etc., and to give priority to those applicants who really needed land;
- (d) To narrow the functions of RIDA so that it can focus its attention on its responsibility for rural people can get a better return for their labour and from the produce of their land.

Furthermore, in the application of phase one, it had been the aim of our Government to make the people of our country feel, no matter how far and distant they may be from the national capital, that their Government, which they elected of their own free will, is a Government which will never forget them, or forget their needs, their hopes and their aspirations.

In fact, Gentlemen, the "Red Book" was conceived, designed and put to use by the Alliance Government for the purpose of ensuring that, no matter how far away any kampong may be, nevertheless, the hopes and needs of its people are forever near to the heart of Government.

I am fairly satisfied with the progress we have already made in phase one, and I have seen for myself on my many tours around the country the many, many completed projects such as roads, bridges, water supplies, schools, clinics and other such developments all designed for the benefit of the people living in the rural areas.

I am also satisfied that there has been a considerable improvement in the co-ordination and tempo of efficiency of the Government machine; there is also evidence of a new spirit of service, a greater sense of urgency and deep-rooted devotion to duty on the part of all officers responsible for the implementation of our Development Plan.

Having therefore launched the framework of phase one, the time is now appropriate for us to launch phase two, and call the people of the rural areas to action, to give of their utmost in

improving the standard of living and in creating a better Malaya. We must mobilise the spirit and energy of the rural people to their own betterment and for the progress of the nation.

Before the advent of colonialism in this country, there was real community life in the villages. Each community was able to meet its own need from its own resources and strength. That community life had become disintegrated under colonial rule. We must, therefore, revive this old spirit of independence of adventures and the desire to provide one's own means through one's own strength and resources.

Our Rural Development Programme will mean a change in the way and in the standard of life of our people. But in the process of change, there must also be continuity. The old way of life, the spirit and the energy must be revived and revitalised. Malaya is a young country and it must progress and continue to progress; but, if in the process of change it also balances with continuity, then the country grows on solid foundation.

This second phase, therefore, means the revival of the old spirit "SEMANGAT" of our people to meet the challenge of progress.

As I said earlier, the degree of progress achieved by a nation is really the reflection and the sum total of the progress made by its individual citizen in its daily tasks of raising and improving his own standard of living. Therefore, if Malaya is to grow into a prosperous and happy nation, each one of its citizens must play his part. We must have the courage and the strength to do our duty for our country and for ourselves. That strength should be drawn from the good qualities of our people and not from any external sources.

You have before you, Gentlemen, a copy of our Directive No. 3 in which is laid out the plan for action for phase two and, if you care to open it, I can best explain its application by going through it with you page by page.



Tun Abdul Razak sedang membincangkan sesuatu di Majlis Pembukaan Persidangan Luar Bandar di Bilik Gerakan Pembangunan Luar Bandar, Kuala Lumpur pada 4hb September 1961. (Gambar Jabatan Penerangan Malaysia).