

# A truly great son of Malaysia

THE recent passing of Tan Sri B.C. Sekhar was a sad moment for the nation. The late Sekhar was a beacon that graced the Malaysian shore. From the time he joined the Rubber Research Institute of Malaysia (RRIM) until the time of his passing, he devoted his life to the advancement of research and development in natural rubber.

From a young researcher, he moved on to become the Director PRIM and ended his illustrious public career as Controller of Rubber Research and Chairman of the Malaysian Rubber Research and Development Board (MRRDB), the first Malaysian to hold both these positions throughout this journey and even thereafter he remained undoubtedly the strongest advocate of the technological and eco-

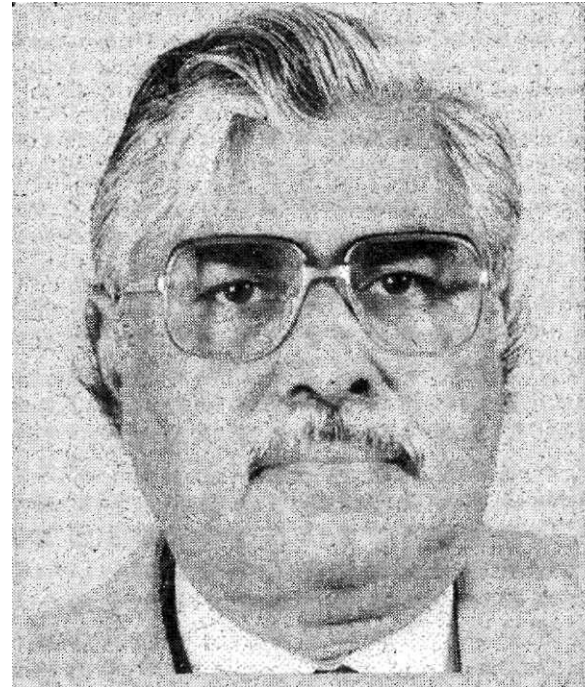
## B.C. Sekhar: A Tribute

economic superiority of natural rubber. Among the many contributions made by Sekhar in his research endeavours the Standard Malaysian Rubber scheme (SMR) that he engineered and promoted in the sixties and early seventies stands out most significantly.

He pioneered numerous innovations and spearheaded various other research programmes, but in all those endeavours he did not forget those whose lives depended on natural rubber. He was actively involved in the internation-

al price-stabilisation scheme for rubber and, in the process helped to better the lives of the small-holders and rural poor in Malaysia and other natural rubber producing countries.

As an administrator, Sekhar also played a decisive role in the wage negotiations to convert the daily wage of RRIM plantation workers into monthly wage in April 1953. This was at a time when the owners of plantation companies were still bent on keeping their workers on daily



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wages while they raked in the millions.

One of his oft-repeated quotes to officials of the union was. "I will take care of the tree while you take care of the man under the tree, but remember that if there is no tree there will be no man underneath it" He eventually took care of both. Today the plantation workers in the RRI enjoy not only monthly wages but also pension rights and gratuity benefits calculated from the initial date of employment.

In September last year, when attempts were being made in the Master Plan to develop the Rubber Research Institute Experimental Station in Sungai Buloh Sekhar made a plea to the authorities to allot an acre to every progeny of the pioneer Rubber Research Institute workers. These progeny would be the second and third generations of the workers i.e. those who had worked at the RRIM station, and whose children or grand children continued to be employed at the station. Honouring his plea would indeed pay tribute to Sekhar. Not only was Sekhai an eminent scientist he

was also a devoted sports enthusiast. He ensured that the RRI recruited sportsmen and sportswomen without compromising the standard and quality of research. When the Rubber Research Institute Recreation Club was formed in 1965, Sekhar was responsible for allocating one of the RRIM bungalows as its clubhouse, and the board made an annual grant for the operational expenditure of the club.

Shortly before his passing, Sekhai was in the forefront to prevent the Tun Abdul Razak Research Centre (TARRC) in Brickendonbury, England, being turned into a spoils centre, while he always remained a sports enthusiast he opposed any form of construction on the TARRC site that would change the nature and character of this renowned research facility.

He argued that the TARRC was the centre of research for natural rubber applications and for good reasons this centre must be located in one of the industrialised countries. What better place than Brickendonbury where we have an established facility for natural rubber research? With his passing we hope that the government will see the wisdom and abandon all attempts to convert TARRC into a sports centre as a tribute to this great Malaysian.

One can continue to write volumes on the contributions of the great icon but sadly after his retirement in 1984, the powers-that-be never found a way to continue to tap his wealth of knowledge and expertise. He however continued the journey on his own and using words "contributed his prepared and motivated mind" to all those within Malaysia and the rest of the world.

The nation owes a debt of gratitude to Sekhar. Saluting him we stand together with many others - those who were fortunate to have worked with him, those who had been acquainted with him as well as those who had known of him.

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