

Progress to a better nation starts with concrete measures

The Sun - 20/7/2020 Pg. 9

IN 1990, then prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad tabled the Sixth Malaysia Plan and launched Vision 2020, which was meant to create, foster and develop a psychologically liberated, secure, mature and democratic Malaysian society; and to ensure an economically just society in which there is a fair and equitable distribution of the wealth of the nation.

It was aimed at establishing a united Malaysian nation made up of one Malaysian race and society that is fully moral, ethical, matured, liberal, tolerant, scientific, progressive, caring and prosperous with an economy that is fully competitive, dynamic, robust and resilient.

Sadly, Vision 2020 was more of a slogan as there was little or no political will and concrete measures taken to overcome the challenges. In 2017, then prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak launched the National Transformation 2050 (TN50) with a vision of propelling Malaysia into the world's top 20 nations.

Najib will have to reach 97-years-old in 2050 to see whether his vision has turned into reality or it was just a pipe dream. Recently, Ipoh Mayor Datuk Rumaizi Baharin announced that the Ipoh City Council (MBI) aims to make Ipoh the cleanest city in Malaysia by 2023.

He disclosed the city council has carried out numerous efforts such as upgrading assets and increasing maintenance staff to carry out sanitation works. He also called upon Ipoh residents to cooperate, as keeping the cleanliness of the city is the responsibility of all.

While the desire to make the city clean ought to be lauded, the aim is flawed, just like TN50. In 2050, the per capita income of Malaysia may be on par with the top 20 nations now. But by then, their

incomes would be very much higher and many other countries as well.

Likewise, MBI should not be targeting at a moving goalpost and treat other cities in the country as incapable of being cleaner than what they already are. By all means, go all out to make one's city clean. But boasting to be the cleanest among dirty cities is meaningless.

Similarly, grandiose vision and mission statements are hollow if an organisation could not even get the basics right. In an ultra-modern building at Putrajaya where visitors normally spend hours waiting, they must endure using toilets that are so filthy they are horror chambers.

And there is no need to set targets whether they are three or 30 years from now. Theodore Roosevelt, an American President from 1901 to 1909 said it best with a few simple words: Do what you can, with what you have, where you are.

Any mayor that genuinely wish to transform a city within the shortest time and least resources could invite residents to be the eyes and reporters of their neighbourhood by using their smartphones to forward photos or videos and text of anything that needs attention by City Hall.

They could be clogged or uncovered drains, potholes or spillovers, animal carcasses or strays, abandoned houses with undergrowth or bird colony, fallen trees or branches, illegal dumping, and five-foot ways or sidewalks blocked with tables and chairs or used for business.

If these are attended to swiftly, both residents and visitors would give City Hall a double thumbs up. If not, all promises made are laughable.

YS Chan
Kuala Lumpur