

TN50 ROUNDTABLE DIALOGUE WITH MALAYSIA'S SCIENTISTS

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The Government is committed to a bottom-up approach to formulate TN50, thus ensuring our future direction reflects the rakyat's aspirations and providing a collective sense of ownership as together we chart the journey of Malaysia's transformation. In short, TN50 will be by the people, with the people and for the people.

Naturally, we began our TN50 engagements with the youth as they are the custodians of Malaysia's future. We are now extending TN50 engagements to cover all segments of society from senior citizens to civil society; just to name a few.

It was a pleasure to be amongst Malaysia's prominent scientists this morning at the TN50 Roundtable Dialogue in Putrajaya. My guests had offered some insights and suggestions at the roundtable session, among others:

Professor Datuk Dr Asma Ismail, Vice-Chancellor of Universiti Sains Malaysia and President of the Academy of Sciences Malaysia (ASM) began by saying that change is inevitable and with the numerous challenges of the 21st century, the only constant is change.

She added that it is important for Malaysia to have our own model in 2050 considering our uniqueness in terms of culture and values. To achieve this, the Academy of Sciences Malaysia offered their vision of a Progressive Malaysia 2050 that is harmonious, prosperous and sustainable by design and not by chance.

In terms of action plan, Professor Datuk Dr Asma suggested that there is a need to rally the nation to provide solutions to national problems using science, technology and innovation (STI) and they have identified 3 main areas which are the digital tsunami, health and fit Malaysia, and zero waste Malaysia.

Meanwhile, Professor Dato' Dr Rahmah Mohamed, Vice Chancellor of Inti University suggested that we should have a designated secretariat to implement STI policies that is

collaborative and inter-ministerial as well as a Research Management Agency. She also called on school children to be a part of the TN50 ecosystem with STI at the centre of the plan. I also agree that it is important for us to realise the potentials of school children and that we need a community that is technologically sound and knowledgeable.

Touching on the subject of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), Professor Datuk Dr Halimaton Hamdan of Universiti Teknologi Malaysia said that in the year 2020, we need one million work force based on STEM and that currently we only have about 30% of the number. To tackle this, she suggested that parents should be more involved, and that the mind set of society should change from being merely consumers to being producers and consumers. She said that youths, especially students, must understand the importance of science for the future. Associate Professor Dr Mimi Haryani Hassim of Universiti Teknologi Malaysia echoed the suggestions of her colleague, saying that the quality of teachers must improve by implementing stricter criteria for STEM teachers.

On lifestyle, distinguished Professor Datuk Dr Looi Lai Meng of Universiti Malaya Medical Centre said that overweight children have increased from 6% to 29% over the years. Concentrated effort must be implemented to address the issue. She also suggested that employers must encourage employees to adopt a healthy lifestyle and government should provide incentives for healthy food.

According to Associate Professor Dr Aduwati Sali from University Putra Malaysia, Malaysia should be the champion of Li-Fi technology and be proactive in setting the universal standard instead of being a mere user.

I thank all participants for their comprehensive views and questions on a wide range of topics from governance, lifestyle, waste management to quality of teachers. The Government will take serious consideration on these suggestions, and I hope that more people, from all segments of society, would get involved in the coming TN50 dialogues.

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