

SPEECH BY THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
AND MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT TO
THE HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS CONCERNED
WITH DEVELOPMENT IN F.L.D.A. SCHEMES,
AT THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE, KUALA
LUMPUR ON 20TH FEBRUARY, 1961

The meeting, this morning, was called in order to discuss in detail the contribution to be made by your various Departments and Ministries to the Development in F.L.D.A. Schemes over the next five years.

Detailed discussion will be held between yourselves, the Chairman of the F.L.D.A.¹ and my Deputy Secretary (Development), but, before you proceed to get down to details, I have taken *this* opportunity, this morning, to come in at the beginning of this meeting because I should like to say a few words so that you may have a clear picture of the Policy which I have laid down for the implementation of Federal Land Development Schemes.

Firstly, I should like you to realise, and remember, that in our National Five-Year Plan we must make sure that the many millions of dollars to be spent on development are in fact diverted towards, true development so that our National money is in fact a proper investment towards progress.

One of the best ways of ensuring that the expenditure of development funds, is in fact, a sound economic investment, is to ensure that as much money as possible goes towards the opening up of new areas of land in the country; every dollar we spend on developing new land can in fact be guaranteed, in one way or another, to result in an economic return.

From a purely economic standpoint, the "dividends" of development in investing funds in opening up new areas, are obviously very much higher than the dividends from developing existing areas.

1 Encik Taib bin Haji Andak.

I do not say that much of our money will not also go towards further developing existing land but nevertheless, you will agree with me, that the real development of our country lies in turning much of our virgin land into areas for new cultivation; because by so doing, we are providing employment and an economic livelihood for those who have no land and in some cases those who have no work at all. Also, although the economic return from opening up new land may be an indirect return as far as our National Revenue is concerned, nevertheless, it is a very real return and a great contribution to the development of our country.

Therefore, for this reason I am determined that everything will be done to produce the maximum and the quickest results possible in F.L.D.A. Schemes throughout the country during the period of the Five-Year Plan.

The stages of Development in F.L.D.A. Schemes may be divided into the following three categories :

- (i) *Pre-development investigation*; such as soil and Mineral Surveys, Reconnaissance Survey, selection of agricultural areas and selection of village areas.
- (ii) *Physical development*; such as Access Roads, Internal Roads, Bridges, Clinics, Schools, Water Supplies, Telephones, Post Offices, Community Centres, etc.
- (iii) *Agricultural development*; such as the division of the land into suitable lots for cultivation, land clearing, planting, etc.

I have appointed a Special Committee which is at present examining the present structure and organisation of the F.L.D.A.; this Committee is to make recommendations as to how Government can give the fullest support in the implementation of the F.L.D.A. Programme.

However, I feel that it is not necessary to await this Committee's final findings before we get started on positive action to produce results on the ground in F.L.D.A. Schemes, because, whatever may be the final decision on the re-organisation of the F.L.D.A., I have already decided that development such as roads, bridges, water, etc. which I call pure development, will be the direct responsibility of the Federal Government.

I have decided on this because, to my mind, one of the reasons for delay in F.L.D.A. Schemes in the past was that such development was a joint responsibility of the State Government (in whichever State a scheme was launched) and the F.L.D.A.

This method of joint responsibility has proved to be unsatisfactory; in many cases it needed considerable negotiation with each State concerned, almost to the extent of begging them to give a road, a water supply, etc., etc., from their State Funds and delays in development resulted.

In our overall National Development Programme most of the funds, which will be spent by State Governments on Rural development, will be derived from Federal sources; therefore, it seems logical to me to take control of these funds at their Federal source and channel the money direct into F.L.D.A. schemes, rather than issue the money out to States in the form of grants, and then have States negotiating with the F.L.D.A.

Also, let us think for a moment what happens when an F.L.D.A. scheme is launched, in a new area. Most of these new areas are far away from the existing services of Government and may even be completely isolated in an almost virgin jungle. The settler has got to be the type of citizen who has a "pioneer spirit" who is prepared to move from his home, wherever it may be, in Malacca, Perlis or Penang, etc., and start a new life; a new life which during the first year or so is a hard life; and we expect these settlers to work hard in cultivating their new land.

Now let us consider for a moment. If we are going to ensure the maximum success in these schemes, and if we are going to expect the best from these settlers, it is only right that we do all possible to give them the essential services of Government in support of their daily task of hard work.

It is, therefore, essential that we provide in each scheme, as quickly as possible, such essentials as:

- (a) A good access road to facilitate transport of foodstuffs, etc.
- (b) A good water supply to ensure health.
- (c) A clinic to cater for their health needs and for accidents.
- (d) A school so that they can have their children with them and will not always want to return every month to their original homes to see their children, if they are left behind.

(e) A Post Office if possible.

(f) A telephone so that a doctor can be called in serious cases of sickness (also I want a telephone wherever possible so that the Manager can be kept up to the mark, when necessary).

(g) Etc., etc.

If we do not give these basic Government services in New Land Settlement Areas, and give them quickly, there is bound to be a drop in efficiency on the part of the settlers who want to "give up" and run away from the scheme because their health has not been cared for, or, because they have left behind their children in some distant school, etc., etc.

There is no reason why we should not provide these basic facilities in the very first phase of all Federal Land Development Schemes, and to do this will be the responsibility of each Head of Department concerned.

I, therefore, would like all of you to take as much interest as possible in the development of every Federal Land Development Scheme included in the National Five-Year Plan and I should like to see a change in the attitude of mind of everyone concerned, that instead of my Ministry or the F.L.D.A. having to go and beg each department for assistance, in the form of making a road, constructing a clinic or a school, etc., that Head of Departments concerned shoulder the responsibility regarding their own particular Department in each scheme and co-operate towards making each scheme a success by each Department giving of its best; I should also very much like to see Federal Heads of Departments, when they tour the country, on their normal duties, make a point of stopping at F.L.D.A. schemes, if they are in the area, and making sure that they take an interest in such schemes in so far as their departmental contribution is concerned.