



# PERDANA 2021 MAGAZINE

[www.perdana.org.my](http://www.perdana.org.my)  
PP17447/12/2013 (033159) ISSN 2231-9532



Inside

PLF CEO Forum 2021

| Tun's Thoughts on Economic Development

| Celebrating MF-PLF Contest Winners



Message from the Chairman  
**Tan Sri Azman Hashim**



Dear readers,

In 2020, we predicted that 2021 would be the year of recovery, economic and healthwise. Then the Delta variant sneaked into our lives, exploding the number of Covid-19 cases in Malaysia and around the world. The country went into its longest lockdown in June 2021 when cases were nearing 10,000 with a rising fatality rate, and only emerged, bruised and shaken, in September. During that period, the number of cases breached the 24k mark and the number of deaths surpassed 10k. Our condolences and Al-Fatihah to the families who have lost loved ones due to Covid-19.

Covid-19 is still with us today; the “new normal” in which masks and Zoom meetings are integral to our daily lives is no longer just a buzzword; it is our reality. As such, the impact on business was the focus of our CEO Forum 2021, the first year that we took the event to the virtual space. “Business in the New Normal” examined the post-pandemic landscape from the macro as well as industry-specific perspective. You can read some of the views shared by our 30-plus panellists within these pages.

Our young Malaysians have been affected by the pandemic, too, with schools and universities being closed for most of 2021, and social gatherings restricted. Fortunately, their youthful vigour remains intact, if the number of entries to our writing and photo contest is any indication. We celebrated the wins of the top winners of the Maybank Foundation-Perdana Leadership Foundation Writing and Photo Contest in a virtual prize-giving event earlier in the year, and present some of their winning entries in the magazine. Congratulations to our young winners who we hope will continue writing and capturing moments on issues close to their hearts in the many years to come.

Documenting key events and policies in Malaysian history is one of our key tasks at PLF. The year 2021 marks the fiftieth year since the introduction of our affirmative action policy, the NEP. Whether you are in support of, or in opposition to the NEP, the policy has been pivotal in shaping the policy landscape of Malaysia since the 70s, and we have compiled resources and quotes on the NEP to mark fifty years of its passing.

A strong proponent of the NEP is none other than our Honorary President, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad. We had the privilege of interviewing Tun for our Oral History series on economic development in February and while we dwelled on issues more recent than the NEP, Tun’s views and opinions as a politician who witnessed and led the economic transformation of Malaysia always makes for interesting reading. In this regard, we are happy to also include an excerpt from Tun’s latest book, “Capturing Hope”, that explains his opinion on affirmative action.

History repeats itself is an oft-quoted phrase pointing out the foibles and fallibilities of humans in repeating past mistakes. There is another side to this, though, in that history also gives us examples that can be transplanted from the past for future success, and provides reminders that while eras and leaders change, values such as integrity, honour, honesty, and hard work stand the test of time.

Here is to 2022 being a better year for Malaysia and the rest of the world.

## **Perdana Leadership Foundation**

Honorary President  
**YABhg Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad**

Executive Committee  
**Tan Sri Azman Hashim (Chairman)**  
**Tan Sri Dato’ Sri Shahril Shamsuddin (Honorary Treasurer)**  
**Tan Sri Datuk Tee Hock Seng (Joint Honorary Treasurer)**  
**Tan Sri Lee Kim Yew**  
**Mr Liew Hau Seng**  
**Dato’ Sri Syed Faisal Albar Syed A.R Albar**  
**Dato’ Sri Robin Tan**  
**Tan Sri Dato’ Sri Zamzamzairani Mohd Isa**

Executive Director  
**Tan Sri Nik Mohamed Nik Yaacob**

Board of Trustees  
**Tan Sri Dato’ Seri AP Arumugam**  
**Tan Sri Azman Hashim**  
**Tan Sri Dato’ Seri Dr. Jeffrey Cheah Fook Ling**  
**Tan Sri Dato’ Francis Yeoh Sock Ping**  
**Tan Sri Datuk G. Gnanalingam**  
**Tan Sri Lee Kim Yew**  
**Tan Sri Lee Oi Hian**  
**Mr Liew Hau Seng**  
**Datuk Mohd Nasir Ahmad**  
**Tan Sri Datuk Hj Mustapha Kamal**  
**Tan Sri Dr Nik Hussain Abdul Rahman**  
**Tan Sri Dato’ Sri Shahril Shamsuddin**  
**Encik S.M Nasarudin Tan Sri S.M Nasimuddin**  
**Dato’ Sri Syed Faisal Albar Syed A.R Albar**  
**Dato’ Sri Robin Tan**  
**Tan Sri Datuk Tee Hock Seng**  
**Tan Sri Dato’ Teh Hong Piow**  
**Tan Sri Dato’ Sri Zamzamzairani Mohd Isa**

## **Editorial Team**

Editor  
**Zarina Abu Bakar**

Assistant Editors  
**Nurul Humaira Kamarulzaman**  
**Mohammad Faridzuan Abd Rahman**

Contributors  
**Maizatul Kartini Kamaruldin**  
**Adnan Rizal Haris**  
**Suriyana Mohd Noor**  
**Hasniza Hashim**  
**Magdalena Anak Lampas**

Photos by  
**Mohammad Faridzuan Abd Rahman**  
**Nurul Humaira Kamarulzaman**  
**Roymax Sebastian**

# CONTENTS

04

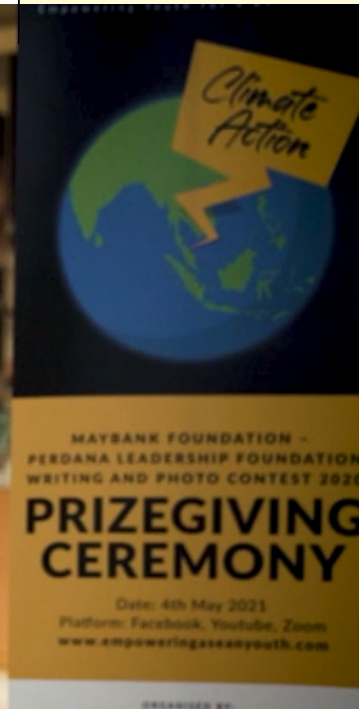
**Our Honorary President**  
Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad launches second memoir



08

## MF-PLF Contest 2020 Prizegiving Ceremony

Imagining a Better World



06

**Book Excerpts**  
Capturing Hope, in his own words

14

## Oral History

On Economic Inequality, and Bangsa Malaysia: A Conversation with Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad

33

## Resource Highlights

New Economic Policy

## From the Archives

Tun Abdul Razak Hussein and the New Economic Policy

34

07

## Online Workshop

Anti-Corruption: A Workshop on Corporate Liability

17

## PLF CEO Forum 2021

"Business in The New Normal"

10

## MF-PLF Contest 2020

Saving Our Environment: Words from Young Malaysians

30

## Article

Reframe the NEP debate, or be deadlocked another 50 years



35

**Resource Highlights:**  
Tun Abdul Razak

36

**Staff Picks**

37

**Books and Merchandise**

38

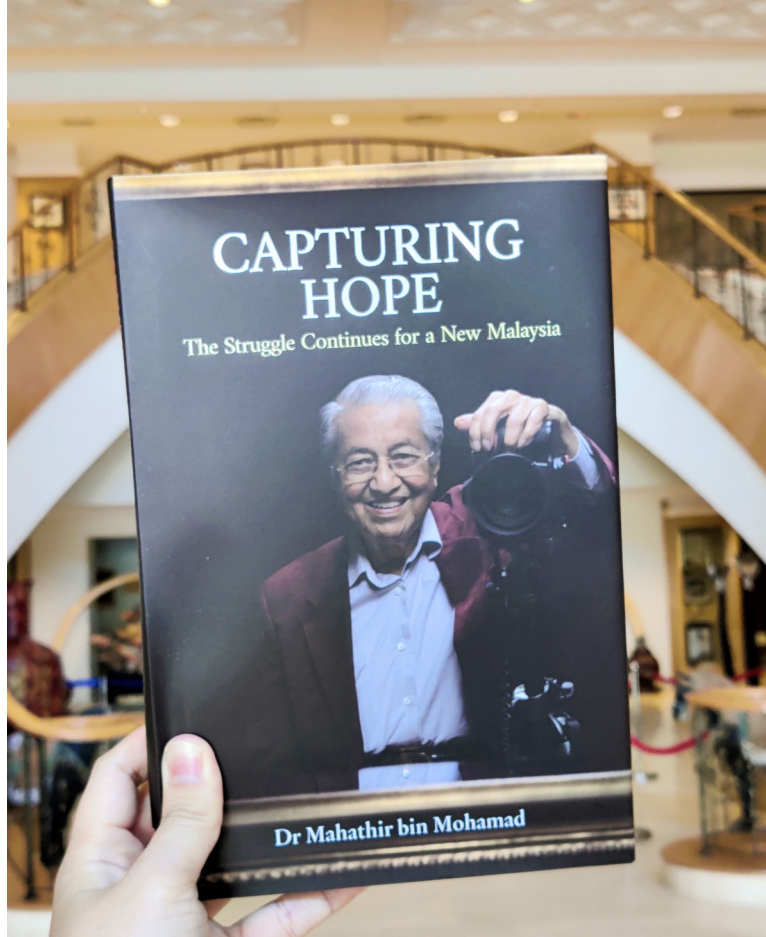
**Our Building in Photos**

A Short Pictorial Tour of PLF

39

**About PLF**





YABhg Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Dato' Dr Vaseehar Hassan



Capturing Tun on camera

## Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad Launches Second Memoir

Time may have slowed down for most Malaysians in 2021 due to the lockdowns, but our Honorary President is never one for resting. In 2021, he continued to engage with members of the public in Malaysia and overseas via numerous virtual talks and interviews. In between and post-lockdowns, PLF managed to get two hours of his time for an in-person Oral History session and for a Keynote Session at our CEO Forum 2021. At the end of the year, Tun unveiled his latest project, a memoir "Capturing Hope" that picks up where "A Doctor In The House" ended. This magazine has an excerpt if you're curious to know more about the book. As lockdown eases, we look forward to hosting Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad in 2022 for our in-person events.

### December 2021

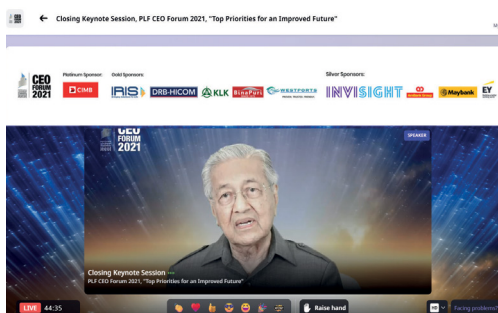
If there is one constant in life, it is change. The past couple of years have certainly been a time of change as the global pandemic forced new lifestyles and new norms on people all over the world. Change is the recurring thread in our Honorary President's newly launched book, *Capturing Hope: The Struggle Continues for a New Malaysia*. The book details his journey after

retiring as Prime Minister in 2003, then getting called back into service due to the politics of the country. Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad also delves into the ever-changing political landscape in Malaysia, and its impact on the country. A highly recommended read as it contains the chronology of events leading up to the historic 2018 general elections which Pakatan Harapan, led by Tun, won, and continues to 2021 when the author turned 96.





Tun Dr Siti Hasmah's book 'Speaking of Mass Destruction...'



Our Honorary President at the finale of PLF's CEO Forum 2021

### November 2021

What are the top priorities for a better future? Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad shared his views at a keynote address that closed our first virtual CEO Forum 2021. In his speech, "Top Priorities for an Improved Future", Tun outlined several key areas which need to be prioritised for this country to change for the better. Specifically, he touched on digitalisation, education, and clear policy direction as well as political stability. To find out more, read our CEO Forum 2021 coverage in this edition.

### February 2021

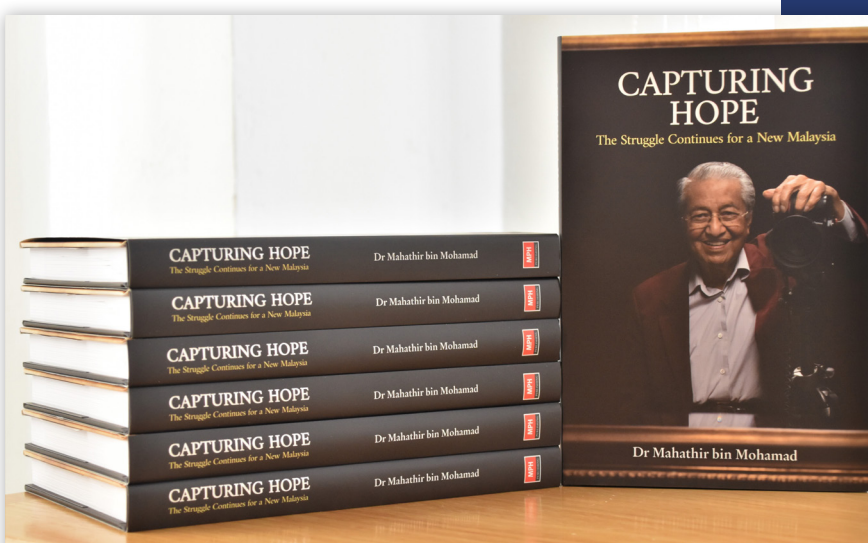
Earlier in the year, PLF had a good dialogue with Tun Dr Mahathir for the second session of our Oral History on Economic Development. In our first session, Tun elaborated on Vision 2020, Shared Prosperity Vision 2030, ASEAN, US-China relations, and the COVID-19 pandemic (check out [Perdana Magazine 2020](#) to know more). This time around, our interviewers sought his views on Malaysia's economic development and achievements as well as lessons learned. The session ended with Tun's take on the traits of good leadership in the 21st century. More on this within the pages of this magazine.



Tun Dr Mahathir also attended Tun Dr Siti's book launch last year. 'Speaking of Mass Destruction...' was launched at the Perdana Leadership Foundation on 3rd December 2021



PLF CEO Forum 2021 Organising Committee with Tun Dr Mahathir



Capturing Hope is available for purchase at the Perdana Library as well as other major retailers such as MPH for an introductory price of RM80 (Normal price is RM100), excluding postage and handling. Perdana Library members get an additional 10% off.

# Capturing Hope, In His Own Words

**Capturing Hope: The Struggle Continues for a New Malaysia** chronologically follows on from the final chapter of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's first memoir, *A Doctor in the House*. *Capturing Hope* chronicles not just the unexpected - and tumultuous - journey of Tun Dr Mahathir to the position of Prime Minister for the second time, but also the great changes taking place within Malaysia today. The book opens with Tun's retirement which gave him the time and means to pursue matters close to his heart—the plight of the Palestinian people and the criminalisation of war— before the country's troubles soon pulled him back into the maelstrom of national politics. Unable to sit idly by as his country plummeted towards disaster, Tun Dr Mahathir found himself in the unique position of opposing the very party he led for 22 years. More astonishing was his victory in Malaysia's 14th General Election and his return at the age of 92 as the seventh Prime Minister of Malaysia, making him the oldest serving head of government in the world at the time. The book's early chapters detail the challenges that Tun Dr Mahathir's government faced, until in February 2020, he stepped down as Prime Minister. The book offers readers a fascinating insight into Malaysian politics and government, from the perspective of a man who had been the country's longest-serving and twice-elected Prime Minister.

"At the time, I had 150 MPs supporting me. It was somewhat ironic that Gobind was the one who stopped me from leaving. His father, the late Karpal Singh, was detained under the ISA during my first administration as Prime Minister, but not once did Gobind refer to the past and what had happened to his father. I was sure it was on his mind. But I think all of us, when we joined together as Pakatan Harapan, had made a conscious effort to let go of the past. I regard Gobind as Gobind, not as the son of Karpal.

Shortly after, the Palace finally issued a statement that I would be sworn in as Prime Minister at 9.30pm. When I finally walked out, the people who had been waiting for so many hours started cheering and waving at me. I was Prime Minister for 22 years before this but I had never encountered a spontaneous show of excitement and joy by the people. I did not cry. But I felt sesak dada (a tightness in the chest) as the Malays would say. It was heart-warming and I felt good."

Chapter 4, *Saving Malaysia*. Page 85

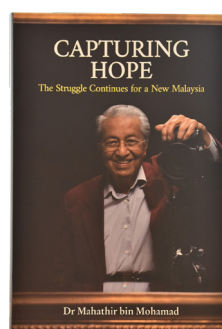
"In Malaysia, we have a chance to learn the values of each community – Malay, Chinese, Indian and other – but what do we do? We separate ourselves – this is Chinese, that is Indian, this is Malay. When we do this, we limit ourselves to our own way of thinking only. And yet every community in this world has values that warrant our attention – if we could look at one another and see what is best in one another, and then strive to emulate those qualities ourselves, we would have a nation of people who are considerate, who would

always do the right thing, keep their promises, work very hard at what they are passionate about, and constantly learn about the world."

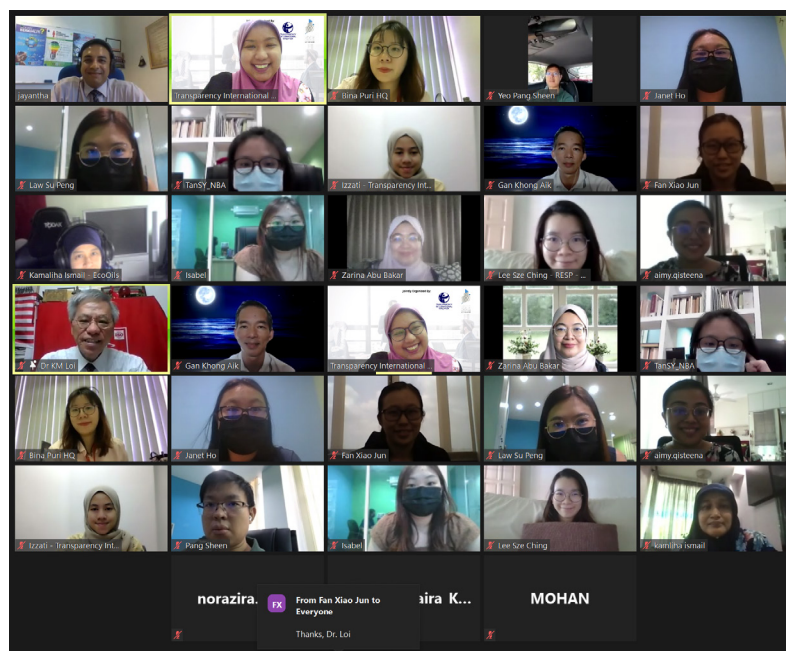
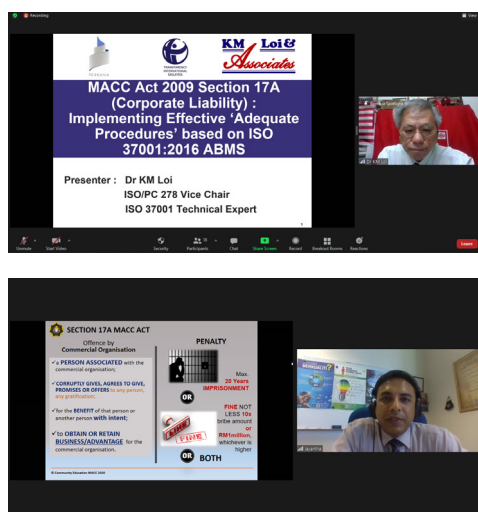
Chapter 9, *Education & Ethics*. Page 202

"While I am a critic of handouts, I don't agree with this view of affirmative action as a negative thing. Affirmative action should not actually involve a deliberate absence of competition. There must be competition - albeit within a specific target group in a slightly more controlled environment. This is especially important if the true purpose of the project is to prepare the target group for true competition. The idea is to not lower the bar for everyone, but to create conditions where those who would otherwise be left behind can catch up and ultimately compete at the higher level with everyone else. It is certainly not about the Government giving an unfair advantage to a single group of people at the expense of others, but what we don't want to see is that group having to compete with people who are much more experienced, and who have more resources that allow them to succeed."

Chapter 7, *The New Malay Dilemma*. Page 152-153







# Anti-Corruption: A Workshop on Corporate Liability

A Collaboration Between Perdana Leadership Foundation  
and Transparency International Malaysia



Awareness Training

## MACC ACT SECTION 17A (CORPORATE LIABILITY)

IMPLEMENTING EFFECTIVE ADEQUATE  
PROCEDURES BASED ON ISO 37001:2016 ABMS

Date: 9 & 10 February 2021  
Time: 9 AM - 1 PM

Via: zoom

Normal fee: RM 699  
Group (3 persons or more): RM 599  
Early Bird: RM 599 (by 2 February 2021)

\*Registration fee is not inclusive of 6% SST  
\*Registration fee includes course material and certificate



Jointly Organised by:



Perdana Leadership Foundation (PLF) and Transparency International Malaysia (TI-M) organised a virtual awareness training on MACC Act Section 17A (Corporate Liability) on 9th - 10th February 2021. This programme was designed for managers and implementers to grasp the essence of MACC Section 17A and ISO 37001:2016 ABMS for compliance with the Guidelines on Adequate Procedures.

The workshop was facilitated by highly experienced professionals. **Tn Jayantha Kumar Sen Gupta**, Head of Community Relations, MACC, spoke on the enforcement of MACC Act Section 17A (Corporate Liability Provision), while **Dr KM Loi**, ISO 37001 Expert, went through the steps for implementation of effective adequate procedures for ISO 37001: 2016 ABMS. **Dr Muhammad Mohan**, TI-M President, used case studies on bribery and communications to emphasise the intricacies of the Act and the complications that can arise on its implementation, and **Mr Raymon Ram**, TI-M Secretary-General, concluded the workshop with case studies that discussed risk factors for manufacturing concerns and what happens when a company is found to be non-compliant during a surveillance audit. The virtual workshop was comprehensive in its coverage of the main issues, and answered participants' burning questions on the Act. Fourteen participants from six organisations attended the workshop.

If you are keen to attend future PLF-TI workshops, do e-mail Puan Nurul Humaira, [humaira@perdana.org.my](mailto:humaira@perdana.org.my) or [plfcomms@perdana.org.my](mailto:plfcomms@perdana.org.my).

# Imagining a Better World

By Mohammad Faridzuan Abd Rahman

*Come with me and you'll be,  
In a world of pure imagination,  
Take a look and you'll see,  
Into your imagination.  
We'll begin with a spin,  
Traveling in the world of my creation,  
What we'll see will defy, Explanation.*

- Pure Imagination. Gene Wilder, Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory.



Tan Sri Azman Hashim



Tan Sri Zamzamzairani Mohd Isa

A world of pure imagination presents beautiful possibilities. The real world, however, can be a harsh departure from wonderful imaginings. The harsh and bleak reality is that Mother Nature is in pain, and humans are the root cause of the environmental degradation she is experiencing. That is more or less the conclusion of the entrants of the **Maybank Foundation – Perdana Leadership Foundation Writing & Photo Contest 2020 “Empowering Youth for a Better ASEAN”** when asked to compose words and photos for the theme **“Climate Action”**. Their entries, though, give much needed hope for the future, as they share observations, dreams, and ideas on what needs to be done in the name of #ClimateAction.

A total of 100 top entries for ten categories were carefully selected over multiple judging rounds from a record 8,062 entries received for the fiction, essay, and photo categories. The winners were feted in grand style at the virtual MF-PLF Contest 2020 Prizegiving Ceremony in early May 2021. Schools won, too, with **Sekolah Seri Puteri**, Cyberjaya coming up tops for Fiction and Non-Fiction category and **SMK Forest Heights**, Seremban besting others for the Photos category.

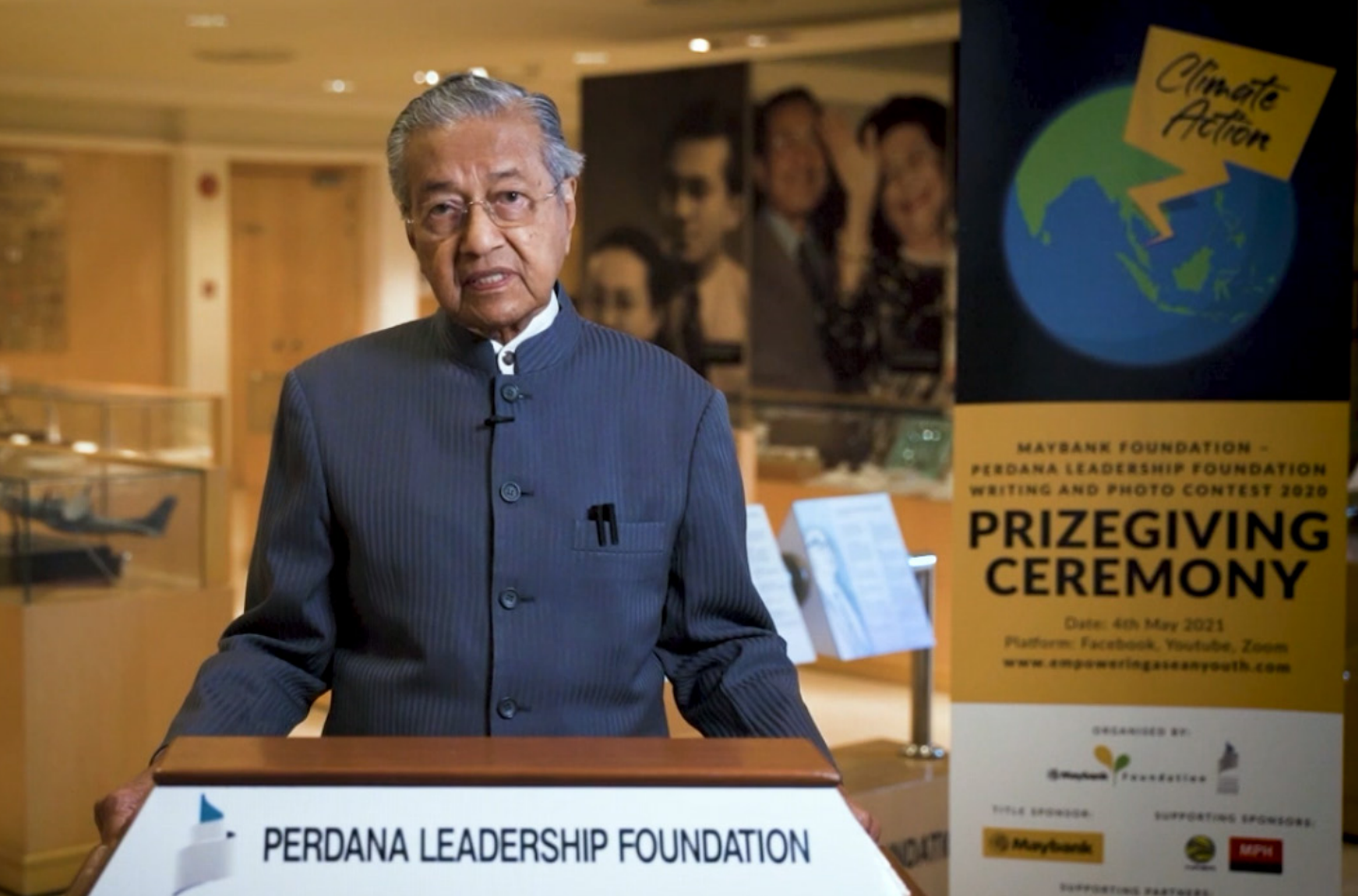
Hosted by Selamat Pagi Malaysia anchor and finalist judge Mr Terrence Dass, the prize-giving ceremony kicked off with Welcome Remarks by **Tan Sri Azman Hashim**, Chairman of the Perdana Leadership Foundation, and **Tan Sri Zamzamzairani Mohd Isa**,

Chairman of Maybank and Maybank Foundation. “We felt that it is an excellent platform to further encourage our youths to think critically about the impact of climate change, and explore ideas on how we can collectively address it.” Tan Sri Zamzamzairani Mohd Isa said about the contest. The judges and winners, too, shared some thoughts during the ceremony, and youth environmental activist, **Ahmad Iszuddin Ahmad Izham**, delivered an inspiring speech on “Empowering Generation Green: How Young Malaysians Can Save the Planet”.

The most rousing speech came from none other than former Prime Minister **YABhg Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad**, Honorary President of Perdana Leadership Foundation. “You may succumb to the notion that you are helpless and powerless because of your age. However, if you reflect on the history of mankind, **you will find that almost all of the great people started at a very young age** – be it Alexander, Tun Razak, Bonaparte, Gandhi, or Wilberforce,” he said, underlining his belief - and ours - in the power of youth.

This is the third edition of the Maybank Foundation – Perdana Leadership Foundation Writing & Photo Contest 2020 “Empowering Youth for a Better ASEAN” Writing and Photo Contest which seeks to encourage and reward young Malaysians between 13 and 23 years of age who display good writing and creative skills via fiction, essays, and photos. More information as well as the complete list of winners are at [www.empoweringaseanyouth.com](http://www.empoweringaseanyouth.com).





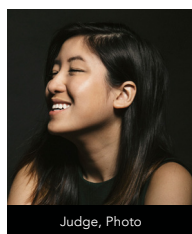
Former Prime Minister YABhg Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad delivering the Keynote Address

## Youth Environmentalist



Ahmad Iszuddin Ahmad Izham

## Our Contest Judges



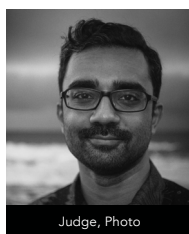
Judge, Photo

Trisha Toh



Judge, Photo

Che Ahmad Azhar



Judge, Photo

Mahen Bala



Judge, Fiction

Arman Jazee



Judge, Fiction

Dr Hasmidar



Judge, Fiction

Cikgu Hailmi



Judge, Fiction

Hanna Alkaf



Judge, Fiction

Tina Isaacs



Judge, Fiction

Tunku Halim



Judge, Non-Fiction

Khairul Abdullah



Judge, Non-Fiction

Johan Irwan



Judge, Non-Fiction

Terrence Dass



Judge, Non-Fiction

Lydia Teh



Judge, Non-Fiction

Dr Salinah Ja'afar



Judge, Non-Fiction

Alexandra Wong

# Saving Our Environment: Words from Young Malaysians

Excerpts from the top fiction and essay winners of the Maybank Foundation -  
Perdana Leadership Foundation Writing and Photo Contest 2020

With over 4,500 entries for fiction and essays, our contest judges had a very tough time in determining the winners! But the job had to be done and after due deliberations, the judges picked the top winners for the writing category. In sifting through the entries, the judges concluded that many entrants had a good command of English and Bahasa Malaysia. They were impressed by the number of entries for fiction which indicated healthy interest in creative writing among young Malaysians. The non-fiction entries also highlighted some persuasive arguments to save the environment, though some essays could do with more critical thinking and originality.

The top ten winners of each category (Fiction, Non-Fiction, and Photo category) will have their entries published in the compilation of winning entries, **"Opinions & Imaginings"**, later this year.



## 1st Place Winner, Non-Fiction English Category (13-17 Years Old)

**Name:** Hii Mao Xing

**School:** St. Joseph International School, Kuching, Sarawak

**Title:** "What can school students do to save the environment and support climate action?"

*You should try to use reusable items instead of disposable ones. Although disposable products may be convenient and cheap, they are often used irresponsibly by humanity, and thus lead to unwanted pollution. A familiar example of disposable products are plastic bags and straws. Approximately one trillion plastic bags are used annually, which is nearly two million per minute. In addition to that, over half a billion straws are used daily by mankind, adding to the ever-growing plastic waste problem. Reusable items, such as cloth bags and metal straws, unlike disposable items, are made to be used repeatedly. This not only helps to conserve resources, but also contributes to a healthier environment.*



## 1st Place Winner, Fiction English Category (13-17 Years Old)

**Name:** Lee Chen

**School:** Sri Kuala Lumpur International School, Kuala Lumpur

**Theme:** "Global Warming"

**Title:** "Diary of the Future"

20.05.45

*Today, we found a rest stop. It was a ghost-town, buried under years of dust and neglect. There were 15 packets of Oxigas, seven flasks of filtered water, and a tin of cream biscuits.*

*It's night now. I lay back, but there wasn't much to look at. We had travelled about 55km over the duration of the last few days. The sky above stared back at me with its onyx depths. I was oddly calm. About 180km left. How about that? I feasted with Marie on the cream biscuits with two cups of water each. The Oxigas I'm inhaling now has a stale taste to it. Like week-old water.*





### Tempat Pertama, Kategori Bahasa Melayu Bukan Fiksyen (13-17 Tahun)

**Nama:** Izza Adiera Binti Izman

**Sekolah:** Sekolah Seri Puteri, Cyberjaya, Selangor

**Tajuk:** "Apakah tindakan yang boleh dilakukan oleh pelajar sekolah untuk menyelamatkan alam sekitar dan menyokong tindakan perubahan iklim?"

Menurut ahli sains iklim Katharine Hayhoe, perkara paling penting yang boleh anda lakukan untuk melawan perubahan iklim adalah bercakap mengenainya. Oleh itu, para pelajar boleh menubuhkan sebuah kelab robotik dan inovasi di bawah jagaan Kementerian Sains, Teknologi dan Inovasi Malaysia (MOSTI) selaras dengan Matlamat Pembangunan Mampan (SDG\*). Kelab ini boleh dikembangkan lagi menerusi kolaborasi antara kelab dari seluruh dunia. Semua ahli kelab dari setiap negara dapat berkongsi pendapat dan juga maklumat mengenai alam sekitar melalui kelab ini.

\* Sustainable Development Goals



### Tempat Pertama, Kategori Bahasa Melayu Fiksyen (13-17 Tahun)

**Nama:** Wan Nur Istasyar Ilhami Binti Wan Anuar

**Sekolah:** Maktab Rendah Sains Mara (MRSM) Kota Putra, Terengganu

**Tema:** "Pemanasan Global"

**Tajuk:** "Hilang"

Jauh di dalam hutan yang tebal, seorang pemuda berdiri merenung pokok keajaiban yang baru ditemuinya. Pokok yang tinggi mencecah langit itu direnungnya penuh kagum. Inilah legenda pokok empat musim yang diwarisi dari generasi ke generasi. Berdiri kukuh dengan akarnya yang terbenam dalam, itulah musim panas. Batangnya yang berselirat dengan pokok tumpang kembang mekar, itulah musim bunga manakala dahannya sejuk berhiaskan kristal ais di musim sejuk. Seperti pokok-pokok lain yang mengelilinginya, dedaun pokok empat musim itu keperangan dengan sebahagiannya luruh ke tanah. Pokok yang mengalami empat musim sekaligus. Silih berganti bagaikan musim sebenar. Pokok itu ditinggalkan, dibiarkan tidak disentuh.



### 1st Place Winner, Non-Fiction English Category (18-23 Years Old)

**Name:** Chrislyn Naysya Pereira

**Institution:** University of Warwick, United Kingdom

**Title:** "What do you see are the major roadblocks to sustainable development, and how would you as a young leader overcome them?"

The absence of an effective framework is compounded by the effects of ignorance on a societal and individual level. Evidence of both hypotheses are evidenced by undesirable behaviours which result in a dismal outcome; this lack of accountability acts as a major roadblock to sustainable development. As long as environmental issues remain beyond our personal concern, sustainable development will remain stagnant. As purchasers and consumers, our behaviour and choices directly impact how corporations behave. The radial effect is that if individuals are collectively aligning their decisions to more sustainable principles, businesses will have to adjust accordingly. As observed by Ismail Serageldin, "Humanity must learn to live within the limitations of the biological and physical environment, both as provider of inputs and as a "sink" for wastes" (Cernea et al. 1). The truth behind this statement is poignant; as long as individual behaviours assume that resources are infinite and climate change is a faraway fiction, we remain on a path to irreversible damage that will impact the most vulnerable amongst us.



### 1st Place Winner, Fiction English Category (18-23 Years Old)

**Name:** Gan Yan Ning  
**Institution:** Taylor's College, Subang Jaya, Selangor  
**Theme:** "Climate Change"  
**Title:** "The Witch and the End of the World."

*It started with the rumour that the witch next door could reverse the end of the world. Ma-Llorona wasn't actually a witch, but she was so misshapen, it made sense to say she was. Her arthritic fingers were claws and the thunk of her cane sounded like the hooves of the devil. She was kind enough, though. She owned nothing but her hut at the edge of the water, a pallet to sleep on, and a book to read prayers from. She lived with us on the outskirts of the city, where everything had been destroyed by the catastrophic change in the climate. Ever since the Earth buckled and killed half its population, we have known no peace. The floods swept away the houses first, after the icebergs in Antarctica succumbed to the increasing temperatures of global warming. Then the fires spread, raging infernos that consumed civilization whole, spewing endless black smoke into the atmosphere. I was young when the world ended, oblivious to the destruction around me. That ignorance bought me my survival. Sometimes I wished it hadn't.*



### Tempat Pertama, Kategori Bahasa Melayu Bukan Fiksyen (18-23 Tahun)

**Nama:** Teh Sze Hui  
**Institusi:** Tunku Abdul Rahman University College (TARUC), Kuala Lumpur  
**Tajuk:** "Menurut pandangan anda, apakah rintangan-rintangan terbesar untuk mencapai pembangunan yang lestari dan bagaimanakah anda, sebagai pemimpin muda, akan mengharungi rintangan-rintangan ini?"

*Bak pepatah berkata, setiap penyakit mesti ada penawarnya, setiap masalah pasti ada jalan penyelesaiannya. Malah, menurut saintis terkemuka, Albert Einstein, "Kita tidak dapat menyelesaikan masalah dengan menggunakan pemikiran yang sama seperti yang kita gunakan untuk menciptanya." Seperti situasi yang berlaku baru-baru ini. Semua lapisan masyarakat di Malaysia sedang menyesuaikan diri dengan norma baharu seperti bekerja dari rumah semasa pelaksanaan Perintah Kawalan Pergerakan (PKP) bagi membendung penyebaran wabak Covid-19. Pihak berkuasa seharusnya merebut peluang keemasan daripada situasi pandemik Covid-19 ini untuk mengekalkan perintah berkurung itu demi menjamin masa depan negara. Ini kerana pelaksanaan PKP ini telah mengurangkan jumlah kenderaan di jalan raya secara ketara. Situasi ini sepatutnya menarik perhatian ramai kerana bacaan Indeks Pencemaran Udara (IPU) di Malaysia telah menurun sebanyak 58.4% dengan bantuan PKP selama dua bulan. Bukan setakat itu, jumlah pelepasan gas rumah hijau seperti karbon monoksida, karbon dioksida dan metana dari kilang-kilang dan kenderaan telah mencatatkan penurunan dan kepekatan zarah halus (PM2.5) juga berkurangan secara mendadak semasa tempoh PKP. (PMC - US National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health, 2020).*



### Tempat Pertama, Kategori Bahasa Melayu Fiksyen (18-23 Tahun)

**Nama:** Muhammad Syazwan Bin Ali  
**Institusi:** Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang  
**Tema:** "Perubahan Iklim"  
**Tajuk:** "Ard"

*Dari jauh, kelihatan satu sosok tubuh wanita dalam lingkungan umur 20-an yang sempurna fizikalnya. Berambut ikal mayang dan bermata besar seindah purnama sedang duduk di bawah teduhan sebatang pokok yang besar – menyusun aksara, bermain kata dan membiarkan dirinya ditelan bait-bait puitis penulissannya sendiri sehingga terlupa masa. Ard; namanya indah sekali – seperti pemiliknya. Diberi nama oleh kedua-dua orang tuanya dalam bahasa Arab yang bermaksud Bumi. Kelahirannya di muka bumi diharapkan dapat memberi sinar baharu kepada bumi yang sudah tenat; simbolik kelahirannya. Namun, Ard tidak pernah mengenal orang tuanya. Dia dibesarkan oleh keluarga angkat sejak kecil lagi. Dunia sekarang tidak lagi seperti dahulu. Kebanyakan tanah rendah di bumi sudah ditelan lautan samudera kerana perubahan iklim yang sangat dahsyat telah berlaku sejak 150 tahun lalu di muka bumi. Akibatnya, bumi mengalami pemanasan global dengan peningkatan purata suhu bumi sebanyak lebih daripada 5 darjah Celsius. Hal ini menyebabkan pencairan ais-ais di Kutub Utara dan Kutub Selatan sehingga menenggelamkan tanah-tanah rendah di bumi. Hasil fenomena penyahmasinan air (akibat pencairan ais), cuaca di bumi juga semakin tidak menentu dan bencana lebih kerap berlaku. Bencana terdahsyat ini diingati oleh warga dunia sekarang sebagai 'Bencana Besar'.*



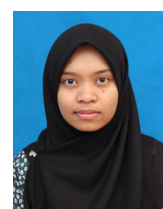


*"Dreams are lovely. But they are just dreams. Fleeting, ephemeral, pretty. But dreams do not come true just because you dream them. It's hard work that makes things happen. It's hard work that creates change." - Shonda Rhimes*



**Photos Category A  
(13-17 years old)**

**Haziq Fikri bin Hazize**  
Sekolah Menengah  
Teknik Tuanku Jaafar,  
Negeri Sembilan



**Photos Category B  
(18-23 years old)**

**Norfazliana binti Nordin**  
Universiti Malaysia  
Sarawak (UNIMAS),  
Sarawak

*"Duhai lautanku yang mulai berubah,  
aku ingin tetap membantumu pulih,  
namun kian ku sedari,  
aku sebenarnya,  
tidak mampu melakukannya seorang diri.*

*Inilah dunia,  
ironiknya banyak pencemaran dan  
kerusakan alam dilakukan masyarakat.*

*Dan ada manusia untuk berhati kejam,  
sanggup meletakkan bebanan yang berat  
berat pada alam ini.*

*Marilah kita bersama-sama memberi  
tangan menyelamatkan alam sekitar kita."*





## On Policy Implementation, Economic Inequality, and Bangsa Malaysia: A Conversation with Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad

In between lockdowns, PLF secured Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's time to gather his thoughts and views for our Oral History series on "Malaysia's Economic Development", past and present. We present an excerpt of the session that he had with interviewers Dato' Dr Vaseehar Hassan and Mr Eddin Khoo in May 2021.

### Dato' Dr Vaseehar Hassan

*If you reflect on 1981 when you became the Prime Minister, what were the most pressing economic issues in your mind at that time? How did you implement those priorities?*

### Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad

Well, when I took over in 1981, the economy was not doing well at all. We had to sit down and think about how to overcome this. We did succeed because we introduced new ideas. We wanted to change people's mindsets. We wanted

them to understand that they are capable but they were not making use of their capability. So, we introduced concepts such as the Look East Policy as we wanted to emulate the Japanese. At that time, the Japanese were doing very well compared to the Koreans and the Chinese. We also introduced Islamic values because they are congruent with development and are good to build the character of the people. Foreign investment soon grew very quickly because (foreign investors) saw Malaysia as a stable country with good policies. So, although the economy was not doing well in 1981, we recovered very quickly.

### Mr Eddin Khoo

*As the Prime Minister, how did you ensure that the economic plans were followed through and implemented by the various ministries under your management, Tun? What is the main obstacle of translating policy into action given our particular circumstances?*

### Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad

This is very important. You can craft policy but it's not going to be carried out unless you know how the person who devised the policy is going to implement it. For example, we made a policy decision to build a road 800 kilometres long<sup>1</sup>. That was a decision but how do you get it done? We were a poor country; the government had no money and there were many other obstacles in the way. So, we decided to build a toll road and have the people who will use that road pay for it. That was one part of the solution. We also faced the very high cost of building the road, and we could not charge high toll rates; that would not make the people happy. High tolls would deter motorists from using the road and the project would be a failure. How could we reduce cost? Well, we worked out a solution whereby the government would lend money to the developer and transfer the land for the road to help reduce



costs. It was not meant to help the developer. Rather, we needed them to build the road but at a lower cost so that toll rates could then be at a more acceptable lower rate. These were all the things we had to figure out from that one policy decision. It is not as simple as it seems.

**There are a lot of suggestions and we have many good policies but we must also know how to materialise them.** How do you do it? So many things have to be done, that cost money, and problems arise when you want to do something. If you suggest a policy, then you need to also know the solution (to implement). If you don't know the solution and you don't guide them, it will not be done. I always demanded that reports be made to me so that I am kept apprised of progress. I also visited project sites often. For example, when they were building the Petronas Twin Towers, I visited every week to see the progress by myself and to ensure that any problem that arose was tackled. Taking a personal interest in the projects that you propose is very important. You cannot propose a project and leave it to somebody else to do it. It's not done.

#### Mr Eddin Khoo

*Perhaps we can leap to your second period in the government. When you became Prime Minister for the second time in 2018 and the moment you took office, what were the economic exigencies?*

#### Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad

We were very concerned about corruption. If we could tackle the problem, the economy would recover. The economy was depreciating because of the costs of doing business in Malaysia and the inefficiency of the government at that time. The focus was not on developing the country but on self-interest. So, that was our first job - to remove corrupt politicians as well as administrators.

#### Mr Eddin Khoo

*Tun, if we could pursue this line of questioning on development again; we had this belief that development and infrastructure growth would lead to economic growth, greater prosperity for the people, peace, harmony, and improved living standards for all. But it seems that the divide between the rich and poor in this country continues to grow. It is one of the highest in the region and it shows no sign of improving. Why do you think this has come about?*

**We gave opportunities and scholarships to thousands of people, but some do well while others fail.**



#### Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad

Well, it is a natural phenomenon. Capable people will grow faster than the people who are not capable. Over time, the disparity becomes bigger and it becomes more difficult for the low-earning people to catch up with the rich. They need to be helped but sometimes they also make mistakes. We helped Bumiputras by giving them licences, Approved Permits, contracts, and all that. What did they do? They sold them for the same amount of upfront money. Therefore, they remained poor and the people who bought from them became very rich.

Only a few made use of the opportunities. The Naza Group, for example. The founder purchased Approved Permits and did not sell them for easy money. Today, Naza is a big and successful group which has gone into housing, development, and other sectors. If the Malays had made full use of the opportunities that were given to them, the disparity between the Malays and the Chinese would have been reduced. If the problem was lack of skills, we were willing to provide training. We can train them to be contractors or to go into business. But they opted for quick cash. They had the licence and the opportunity, but they sold them away. The people who bought the licence became rich and they remained poor.

#### Dato' Dr Vaseehar Hassan

*Was that a flaw in the selection process because we were giving opportunities to everyone instead of selecting people like (the founders of) Naza and Sapura who made good use of the privileges afforded to them?*

#### Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad

We had no means of determining how they would perform. We had



Mr Eddin Khoo presenting the memoirs of Tan Sri Khoo Kay Kim to Tun

generated a lot of opportunities and there were many applicants. Even then, we could not give to everyone. We were always under pressure to give to more people as people claimed that selecting a few was not fair. I was already charged with cronyism, accused of giving licences to my friends only. What happened was that I gave (licenses) to a lot of people but only a few succeeded. Those few who succeeded were called my friends. They were not my friends before they succeeded. I personally did not know (the late) Tan Sri Nasimuddin and Tan Sri Syed Mokhtar but they succeeded with the opportunities given them. For every one person who succeeds, there may be a hundred people who fail. The ones who fail received the same opportunities but they did not know how to make use of them.

So it is not true that we discriminated by giving only to our cronies. We gave opportunities and scholarships to thousands of people, but some do well while others fail. Unfortunately, those who do well are accused of being cronies to the government and me. The only way I can avoid being accused of cronyism is to make sure that they all fail! But then, where is the good in a policy that fails?

**Dato' Dr Vaseehar Hassan**

*One of the ideas of Vision 2020 was creating Bangsa Malaysia. You had explained that Bangsa Malaysia*

*means that all Malaysians must think of themselves as Malaysians first, not as their ethnic group. Where are we in this today? What are the challenges of creating a Bangsa Malaysia?*

**Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad**

Well, it's very difficult because unlike other countries where migrants accept the language and culture of the indigenous people, we rejected this in Malaysia. At the time when we became independent, the Chinese still wanted to identify themselves as Chinese. The Indians also wanted to call themselves as

## The resistance to become Malaysian is very strong.

Indians and of course, the Malays wanted to call themselves as Malays. They did not want to lose their (ethnic) identity. The result, of course, affects our politics. In any democratic country, if you don't follow the wishes of the people, you will lose. The corrupt may be able to bribe people (for votes) but normally, you have to respond to the wishes of the people.

Today, people still feel that they are not Malaysians. They are

Chinese Malaysians, or Indian Malaysians, and the identity with this country is not a full one. This is the problem that we face. I proposed that we have Chinese, Tamil, and national schools on one campus<sup>2</sup>, so that certain activities can be shared across schools. For example, students can gather together every morning for assembly or they can meet each other through sports. Sports houses can draw members from each school instead of being confined to one school. This is one way to get young Malaysians to mix, but the idea was rejected by Dong Jiao Zong<sup>3</sup>. The resistance to become Malaysian is very strong.

**Dato' Dr Vaseehar Hassan**

*Is it because of the political structure that we embraced after Independence (1957) that created this division? Are the people or the politicians responsible for this division?*

**Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad**

The politician has to respond to the people. It would be easy if the people are willing (to assimilate) but from the time of Independence, there has been resistance. I had once thought that we would be able to become a Malaya where everyone speaks Malay as their home language, in much the same way that Americans speak English. In the US, even citizens who are of German or Dutch origin speak American English and identify only as Americans. But in Malaysia, the people don't want to do that. We want to retain our home language. Officially, we use Malay but we still want to have our own (vernacular) schools. So, the resistance is strong.

<sup>2</sup> Vision Schools

<sup>3</sup> United Chinese School Committees' Association of Malaysia (Dong Jiong)



PLF CEO FORUM 2021

## Opening Session

# A Warm Welcome and an Insightful Panel Kicks Off the Virtual PLF CEO Forum 2021

PLF hosted the 8th edition of its flagship CEO Forum on 20th and 21st October 2021. Virtual for the first time, the Forum featured more than 30 speakers in 11 plenary, keynote, and concurrent sessions centred on the theme **"Business in the New Normal"**.

Attended by more than 300 people, the Forum was made possible with the generous sponsorship of Platinum Sponsor **CIMB**, Gold Sponsors **Bina Puri Holdings**, **IRIS Corporation**, **DRB-HICOM**, **Kuala Lumpur Kepong Berhad**, and **Westports Malaysia**, and Silver Sponsors **AmBank**, **Maybank**, **EY**, and **Invisight**.

The Forum started off bright and early with welcome remarks from PLF Chairman, **Tan Sri Azman Hashim**. In his short address, Tan Sri reminded the audience of the enormity of the challenge Malaysia and the rest of the world face in battling the ravages of Covid-19. He pointed out that the world is irrevocably changed due to the pandemic but the new equilibrium has yet to be attained. As such, businesses and people remain in flux and have to constantly adapt.

*"As a banker since the 1960s, I have seen quite a few economic upheavals in my time but I have not seen a disruption in lives, business and the economy on the scale and level that Covid-19 has wrought. First, we as a nation mourn the deaths in Malaysia due to Covid. The deaths are sorrowful reminders of our own frailty in the face of the unexpected. Al-Fatihah and condolences to the families of all affected. Slowly but surely, we are pulling ourselves out from the depths of the pandemic. As the number of infections and deaths fall, and as businesses emerge from lockdowns, the question that we now face is this: what has the world become in the two years of the pandemic?"*

- Tan Sri Azman Hashim

Tan Sri's opening remarks were followed by an insightful Plenary session moderated by **Dr Hezri Adnan**, Executive Director of MIER, on **"The New Paradigms for Business and the Malaysian Economy"**, where Panellists



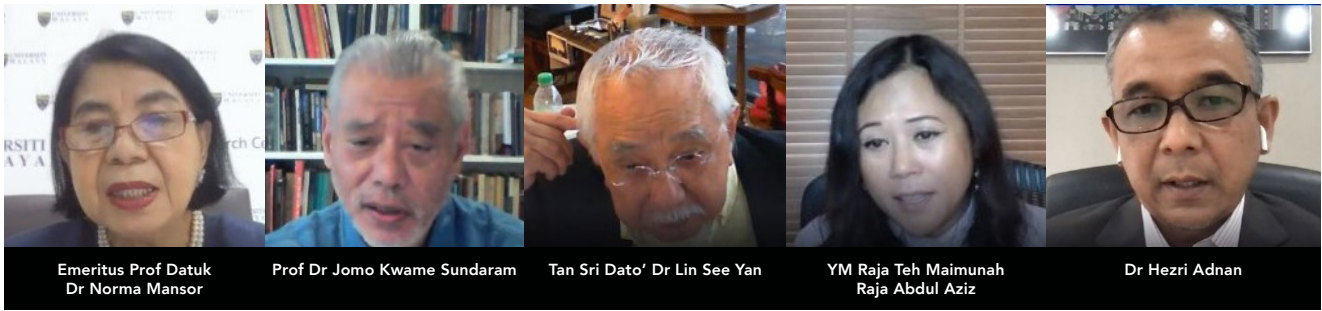
Tan Sri Azman Hashim at the opening session

YM Raja Teh Maimunah, Tan Sri Dato' Dr Lin See Yan, Emeritus Prof Datuk Dr Norma Mansor, and Professor Dr Jomo KS, elaborated on the shifts necessitated by Covid-19.

Dr Hezri helpfully highlighted key megatrends for the coming year: first, that this is a "remarkable period of innovation", with one measure, the number of patents in the US, doubling in the past year from the year before. Second, e-shopping, virtual classrooms, and online meetings are here to stay. Third, healthcare has seen a boom that will likely continue, especially in vaccine research, with more than US\$180 billion spent on developing Covid-19 vaccines. Finally, there is more concerted focus on sustainability with trillions being spent on renewable energy and environmental protection.

Against this global change scenario, **Tan Sri Dato' Dr Lin See Yan**, Executive Chairman of Zeta Advisory, pointed out that governments do face tougher policy choices as the pandemic has meant subdued economic growth which invariably leads to greater income inequality, higher unemployment, and food insecurity. While many expect the global economy to rebound, economic recovery will be uneven for some time to come, due to the uneven pace of vaccine rollouts, variations in available government support, and the possibility of more aggressive Covid-19 variants. Malaysia's economic position, too, remains in question as it has slipped from third to sixth position in ASEAN with no clear policy direction.

Picking up on the subject of uneven economic growth, **Emeritus Prof Datuk Dr Norma Mansor**, President of the Malaysian Economic Association, stated one impact of Covid-19: Around 770,000 Malaysians remain unemployed following the closure of thousands of businesses in 2020 and 2021 due to the prolonged lockdowns, despite all the stimulus packages the government has introduced. This has deepened structural inequality in Malaysia. For Malaysia to heal properly from the pandemic and address the structural disrepair, longer-term policies that include emphases



on digitalisation, social protection, and environmental responsibilities, are required. She also mentioned three immediate areas of concern: digitalisation in the private and public sectors; promoting trade opportunities for Malaysian companies, especially for exports of environmentally-friendly goods; and data openness as this will allow innovative entrepreneurs to provide services that leverage on public data.

On the subject of digitalisation, **YM Raja Teh Maimunah**, Managing Director of Wholesale Banking, AmBank Group, recounted the experience of AmBank having to shift thousands of employees to a work-from-home environment. It required plenty of planning, coordination, but also expenditure on devices and connections. Small and micro enterprises do not have the same capacity to adapt as most are not able to afford the shift to digital. This is where banks and the government can play a role; the banks in providing digitalisation financing and the government in ensuring the nation's digital infrastructure is robust and affordable. In terms of broadband speed, Malaysia unfortunately ranks 94th among 140 countries in the world.

Continuing the thread on SMEs, **Professor Dr KS Jomo**, Research Advisor of Khazanah Research Institute, stated that due to globalisation, many economies, including Malaysia's, are dominated by big foreign firms. This means less attention to the SME sector, despite this sector being the one where new Malaysian capabilities can be grown and nurtured. He gave the example of the 1980s when Malaysia's palm oil sector grew not just in

*"As to be expected, emerging Asia, in particular China and India, are driving world growth and world trade."*  
- Tan Sri Dato' Dr Lin See Yan

*"It's estimated that the informal work and gig sector constitutes about 31.5% of our GDP between 1995 and 2015, with around 1.2 million workers."*  
- Emeritus Prof Datuk Dr Norma Mansor

### PANELLISTS

- 1 Emeritus Prof Datuk Dr Norma Mansor, President, Malaysian Economic Association
- 2 Prof Dr Jomo Kwame Sundaram, Research Advisor Khazanah Research Institute
- 3 Tan Sri Dato' Dr Lin See Yan, Executive Chairman, Zeta Advisory
- 4 YM Raja Teh Maimunah Raja Abdul Aziz, Managing Director, Wholesale Banking AmBank Group

### MODERATOR

Dr Hezri Adnan, Executive Director, Malaysian Institute of Economic Research

terms of its economic contribution but also in terms of the Malaysian capabilities it developed. The Malaysian economy today, he said, is not built by Malaysians alone, and it's crucial that the foreign factor is taken into account in national statistics, especially labour productivity. The pandemic should give us pause and compel us to review the composition of our national economy.

The full summary, as well as points raised by each panellist, will be made available at [www.perdanaceoforum.com](http://www.perdanaceoforum.com).

*"The SMEs that, 18 months down the road, still have not figured out how to sell or transact online are most likely those that have had to close shop."*  
- YM Raja Teh Maimunah

*"In Malaysia, we pretend as if it is only Malaysians who are building the economy when the labour force is almost one third foreign."*  
- Prof Dr KS Jomo



PLF CEO FORUM 2021

## Keynote Address

**"Lessons Learned From Malaysia's Battle Against Covid-19" by Datuk Dr Hishamshah Mohd Ibrahim, Deputy Director-General of Health, (Research & Technical Support), Ministry of Health, Malaysia**

## Covid-19 has Prepared Malaysia for Future Pandemics



Datuk Dr Hishamshah Mohd Ibrahim

Datuk Dr Kuljit Singh

The Covid-19 pandemic thrust the Ministry of Health to the fore with the public depending on the rapid response of the Ministry in dispensing care, treatment, and advice. The pandemic was the first in recent history to cause global alarm, and while Malaysia had painful lessons to learn in the midst, there were also successes.

Given the country's experience in dealing with Covid-19, the Deputy Director-General of the Ministry of Health, **Datuk Dr Hishamshah Mohd Ibrahim**, representing Tan Sri Datuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah, the Director-General of Health, had plenty of wisdom to draw on in his keynote address, **"Lessons Learned from Malaysia's Battle Against Covid-19"**.

He began by quoting from an article in *Frontiers in Public Health*<sup>1</sup>, that Malaysia's response followed the framework of knowing the enemy or source identification, and fighting the enemy or control strategies. Datuk Dr Hishamshah stressed the importance of being able to rapidly identify emerging pathogens to figure out how to limit their spread. It is also vital, he said, to prepare for sudden shifts in supply-demand dynamics when it comes to medical supplies such as PPEs, ventilators, and ICU beds. In this, Malaysia managed relatively well in mobilising its National Security Council (NSC) and its National Crisis Preparedness and Response Centre (CPRC).

In the Covid-19 pandemic, vaccines play a key role in bringing the disease under control. However, non-pharmaceutical measures such as lockdowns, closures of schools, compulsory work-from-home arrangements, and bans on mass gatherings did their part in the pre-vaccine stages of the pandemic. Adherence to safety measures are still necessary.

Datuk Dr Hishamshah highlighted the role that the private sector played in patient care and hospitalisation which helped to reduce public burden, the beginning, he said, of closer public-private health cooperation. The session's moderator, **Datuk Dr Kuljit Singh**, President of the Association of Private Hospitals Malaysia, agreed, stating that the private sector is only too happy to assist where it could, and the framework for cooperation that is now in place as a result of the pandemic only requires fine-tuning in preparation for the next pandemic.

To the question of whether Malaysia is ready to face future pandemics, Datuk Dr Hishamshah's response was a confident, "Yes! We certainly can. However, we have learnt that mitigation of crisis management needs multiple interventions and unprecedented changes and manipulations no matter how prepared we are, and on that I can say that **Malaysia is now more prepared to face such challenges than ever before.**"

<sup>1</sup> Lessons Learnt From the COVID-19 Pandemic, Stenseth, NC, et al, August 2021, <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpubh.2021.694705/full>

The full transcript of Datuk Dr Hishamshah's speech is already up on <https://perdanaceoforum.com/media/>. The transcript of the entire session will be published on the same website in the coming weeks.

Keynote Address

**"Shifting the Malaysian Economy into Higher Gear: Statistics, Strategy, and Action" by YB Dato' Sri Mustapa Mohamed, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Economy)**

# There is No Return to "Business As Usual"

Where does the Malaysian economy stand in terms of its recovery and what are government plans for its way forward? Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, **YB Dato' Sri Mustapa Mohamed**, addressed these questions in his remarks on **"Shifting the Malaysian Economy into Higher Gear: Statistics, Strategy, and Action"** at the Forum.

In that speech, he acknowledged the ruinous hit to the Malaysian economy caused by the pandemic. "The pandemic resulted in cut-backs in demand, severe disruptions to the supply chain, a steep fall in income levels, and knock-on effects in troubled sectors that resulted in wide-scale retrenchment. Lives, livelihood, and businesses were severely affected. In 2020, our domestic economy contracted by 5.6%. It was our worst economic performance since the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis," YB Dato' Sri said.

The economy was now on the mend but there would be no question of "business as usual" as the pandemic has exposed the economy's frailties: **"Given the challenges prior to the pandemic and the new challenges arising from this crisis, the Government has recognised that we cannot adopt a business-as-usual approach in dealing with post-pandemic challenges.** We need to take the bull by the horns. Some of the vulnerabilities and weaknesses exposed by this crisis are certainly not new. Hence, it is imperative that the Government takes this opportunity to reform the economy and "build back better".

Building back better is what the 12th Malaysian Plan aims to do, while the eight stimulus packages introduced by the government seeks to shore up ailing businesses during and post-pandemic. Before wrapping up his



speech, YB briefly summarised the main areas of focus: "The government's priorities in the next five years include increasing incomes, eliminating absolute poverty, and reducing development gaps between states and regions, as well as ensuring quality growth that is sustainable."

A member of the Economic Planning Unit, **Dr Anthony Dass**, who is also AmBank's Chief Economist, then elaborated on some of the points mentioned by Dato' Sri as well as answered questions from the audience.

The new norm, Dr Dass stressed, can no longer revert to doing business as it did, pre-pandemic. He highlighted the ways that businesses would have to evolve:

- a. They need to incorporate **ESG** (Environmental, Social, and Corporate Governance) considerations into business decisions, as climate change will have a greater impact on business and consumer trends than ever before
- b. Malaysian businesses have to be **international in outlook**, as the signing of the CTPPA (Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement) heralds a new phase of international trade and competition;
- c. **Digitalisation** is not an option for any business, and automation, including robotics, is also becoming increasingly necessary.
- d. **Reskilling** Malaysia's talent pool is crucial; with businesses going digital and factories automating, existing graduates need to be re-assessed and re-skilled to ensure they have up-to-date skill-sets.

*The full transcript of both YB Dato Sri's speech as well as Dr Anthony Dass's elaboration will be posted on [www.perdanaceoforum.com](http://www.perdanaceoforum.com) in due course.*



PLF CEO FORUM 2021

## Keynote Address

**"The Environmental Imperative and What It Means for Businesses" by Tan Sri Dr Jemilah Mahmood, Executive Director, Sunway Centre for Planetary Health**

## It's Way Past Time for Us to Act to Save the Environment: Tan Sri Dr Jemilah Mahmood



Tan Sri Dr Jemilah Mahmood

Sunway's Centre for Planetary Health's newly-appointed Executive Director, **Tan Sri Dr Jemilah Mahmood**, or Dr Jim as she prefers to be called, is no stranger to crises. The founder and former CEO of humanitarian NGO Mercy Malaysia, Dr Jim has been to locations devastated by war, famine, and natural disasters, and has seen her share of hardships. Now, however, the scale of the devastation that is under way is global and we cannot return to "business as usual".

"The business-as-usual attitude that has spanned entire generations, is one the main reasons that the pandemic happened in the first place, with zoonotic leaks spurred on by the human-created, human-generated imbalances in our relationship with the natural ecosystem," Tan Sri pointed out in her keynote address at the CEO Forum, **"The Environmental Imperative and What It Means for Businesses"**.



She reminded businesses of the importance of taking care of the environment and why a focus on the bottom line can backfire. **"A sick planet ultimately means sick people equals damaged economies and bankrupt or at the least under-performing businesses.** Our endless quest for economic growth needs to be tempered with acknowledgement that nothing lasts forever, that this economic model is actually NOT sustainable, by any definition that you choose, and that it's way past time to think about a new way of ensuring that the human race can survive on this planet...**To exercise the environmental imperative, we need to recognise that our economy cannot be designed just for the rich to get richer and the cost be damned.** The economy should be embedded within, and dependent upon, society and the living world."

In her recorded address, Dr Jim elaborated on some of the measures that businesses can adopt for the environment, including rethinking the supply chain, and educating communities on renewable energy. Consumers, too, should push for greater ESG (Environmental, Social, and (Corporate) Governance) accountability from businesses. In Dr Jim's words, it's "way past time" for all of us to act to save our planet.

Tan Sri Dr Jemilah Mahmood's speech transcript can be found at <https://perdanaceoforum.com/media/>.

Concurrent Session A

# "Tourism & Hospitality: A Long Journey of Recovery"

In this session, panel members discuss the effects of the pandemic to the tourism and hospitality industry. With the destructive nature of Covid-19, and the ever-changing policies in the early days of the pandemic, these two industries certainly took the brunt of the impact. But now as we are walking down this path of recovery and change, the panel highlighted several key areas that might just be the game changer for industries moving forward. Chief among them is boosting domestic tourism. Other key areas include further privatisation and modernisation of the tourism industry, and clear and effective SOPs from the government.

First and foremost is to **boost the domestic tourism market**. With the international border being (mostly) closed, people simply are not allowed to travel overseas for their vacations and would instead turn to domestic travel. It is imperative that investments be made by those in the industry to improve the domestic markets' offerings so that they are more attractive to both local and international travellers. **Mr Francis Teo** of Malaysian Association of Convention and Exhibition Organisers and Suppliers (MACEOS) explained the need for the domestic tourism market to be as competitive, if not more, as international tourism. **Mr Yap Lip Seng** of Malaysian Association of Hotels (MAH) agreed with him, pointing out that in 2019, the average spending of domestic tourists was RM400, compared with RM3,000 for international tourists.

They believe that **closer public-private cooperation** will benefit the industry; industry leaders can help set a new standard for tourism, for the rest to follow, and this new standard would compel a more business-driven approach to more international high-yield tourists to Malaysia. On the topic of modernisation, **Mr Denis Ong** of MyBHA, believes that more hotels need to be on digital platforms. This will make budget hotels less dependent on international online travel agencies (OTA) and enable direct reservations by travellers. Direct bookings will enable the hotels to better cater to their guests for customer loyalty.

The panellists commented at the close of the session on the need for **clearer SOPs by the government**, as well as more timely announcements of new or amended



## PANELLISTS

- 1 Mr. Denis Ong, Secretary General, Malaysia Budget & Business Hotel Association (MyBHA)
- 2 Miss Mint Leong, Deputy President, Malaysian Inbound Tourism Association (MITA)
- 3 Mr. Yap Lip Seng, Chief Executive Officer, Malaysian Association of Hotels (MAH)
- 4 Mr. Francis Teo, President, Malaysian Association of Convention and Exhibition Organisers and Suppliers (MACEOS)

## MODERATOR

Mr Nigel Ong, Honorary Secretary-General, ASEAN Tourism Association (ASEANTA)

SOPs, especially as organisations such as MAH and MyBHA will play a major role in making sure that its members adhere strictly to them.

*"The pandemic has been nothing short of extremely challenging and I think we have to take our hats off to the government at this point for getting us to the 90% mark."* - Nigel Wong

*"Tourism industry needs to be treated as a business and not just a department or sector or an industry where you have the public sector doing the policies and so on"* - Yap Lip Seng

*"MyBHA always encourages all (budget hotel) owners and operators to digitalise."* - Denis Ong

*"Between International and Domestic Tourism, the domestic market doesn't significantly help the travel agent because travel agents are still highly dependent on inbound and outbound tourism"* - Mint Leong

*"Hybrid events are the way things are going to go in the future, as organisers transition from virtual to hybrid."* - Francis Teo

PLF CEO FORUM 2021

## Concurrent Session B

## "Are We There Yet? Future-Proofing Malaysian SMEs"

In Concurrent Session B: "Are We There Yet? Future-Proofing Malaysian SMEs", moderator **Datuk Dr Hamzah Kassim** of The iA Group highlighted the major disruptions of the past one and a half years that have forced SMEs to embrace digitalisation. **Mr Gopi Ganesalingam** of MDEC mentioned the challenges faced by micro-enterprises in adopting digitalisation to help them grow their market and leverage on e-commerce, while **Mr George Lee** of Innov8tif Solutions shared his personal experiences in terms of persuading enterprises to adopt digital technologies during the pandemic. He added that enterprises must change their approach to engage new customers or they will lose out to rivals that incorporate tech into their business model from day one.

**Mr Adam Yee** of Siemens Malaysia highlighted his company's role in driving the adoption of the latest technology for SMEs and the need for further collaboration between government agencies and the private sector to ensure more widespread digitalisation for small and medium enterprises in line with Industry 4.0 goals. From the government's side, **Mr Rizal Nainy** of SME Corp mentioned the various stimulus packages that are available for SMEs. PRIHATIN which was introduced as part of Budget 2021 has nine comprehensive economic packages while PEMULIH addresses critical pandemic-related issues faced by SMEs, in terms of finance, cash flow assistance, job retention, human capital and development, infrastructure development, as well as the adoption of technology and digitalisation.

All panellists agreed that **Covid-19 has deepened the divide** that exists in terms of skills, income, and digital adoption. As such, an inclusive support system needs to be in place to create a sustainable ecosystem for micro and small-medium enterprises in Malaysia.

The full summary, as well as points raised by each panellist, will be made available at [www.perdanaceoforum.com](http://www.perdanaceoforum.com).



### PANELLISTS

- 1 Mr Adam Yee, President & Chief Executive Officer, Siemens Malaysia
- 2 Mr George Lee, Chief Executive Officer, Innov8tif Solutions Sdn Bhd
- 3 Mr Gopi Ganesalingam, Senior Vice President and Chief Digital Industry Officer, MDEC
- 4 Mr Rizal Nainy, Chief Executive Officer, SME Corp

### MODERATOR

Datuk Dr Hamzah Kassim, Co-Founder & Chief Executive Officer, The iA Group

*"Are SMEs ready to adopt tech? I would say yes, because today, their customers are used to tech and know it very well. Who doesn't use Grab, Shopee, Foodpanda, and the rest?" - Mr George Lee*

*"Digital transformation has to start from the inside; a company needs to understand its processes and requirements before it can determine what digitalisation it needs to remain relevant." - Mr Adam Yee*

*"To survive in this post-pandemic world, there are three areas that MSMEs can adopt to navigate the new normal: Sustainability, digitalisation and innovation, and inclusiveness." - Mr Rizal Nainy*

*"I think we need to understand that we need to educate our youth and the current workforce. Traditional jobs will be obsolete, but there will be 40,000 types of different jobs as replacements." - Mr Gopi Ganesalingam*

*"We are in the early phase of recovery. It's a very important phase, but we have to live with this uncertainty and ambiguity for the next few years." - Datuk Dr Hamzah Kassim*



PLF CEO FORUM 2021

Concurrent Session C

# “Reviving Retail: The Way Forward”

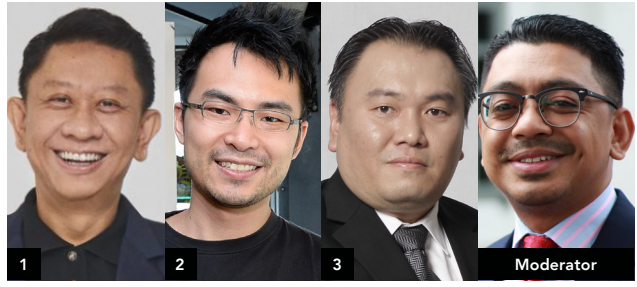
In this session, the moderator, **Mr Firdaos Rosli** of Malaysian Rating Corp Bhd, set the scene by highlighting the devastating impact of Covid-19 lockdowns: the retail sector contracted about 16% in 2020, its worst performance since the Asian financial crisis. In August 2021, retail sales fell by 7.5% year-on-year, compounding the previous month’s decline of around 8%. He also posed the question as to what would be the way forward? For good measure, he mentioned consumer rationality and pointed out that if consumers become more rational in their decision-making process, it would affect the economy, though the direction of impact may not be what was expected.

The panellists agreed that the lockdowns had been extremely bad for business but also spoke of how they forced a review of their business model and their approach to technology. As a technology provider, **Mr Fong Wai Hong** of StoreHub spoke passionately on the importance of utilising technology in the new normal, especially the importance of customer engagement. Traditionally, customers would visit physical stores, but in the new norm, business owners have to reach out to their customers, and technology provides ample opportunities for this engagement to be done virtually.

**Mr Kenneth Chuah** of Lotus’s Stores Sdn Bhd highlighted changing customer expectations and the difference in experience between physical and online stores, and how Lotus’s has balanced the two channels, while **Mr Shafie Shamsuddin** of AEON Co. mentioned “symbiotic collaboration” as one of the ways to move forward. **New business models are not only needed in retail but in other industries as well**, including banking, logistics, and media, requiring an overhaul in how “retail” is defined.

All speakers mentioned that the retail sector is ready to embrace change, but challenges remain with the capacity and speed of adaptation to technology.

The full summary, as well as points raised by each panellist, will be made available at [www.perdanaceoforum.com](http://www.perdanaceoforum.com).



PANELLISTS

- 1 Mr Shafie Shamsuddin, Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director, AEON Co.
- 2 Mr Fong Wai Hong, Chief Executive Officer, and Co-Founder, StoreHub
- 3 Mr Kenneth Chuah, President, Lotus’s Stores Sdn Bhd (Lotus’s Malaysia)

MODERATOR

Mr Firdaos Rosli, Chief Economist, Malaysian Rating Corp Bhd (MARC)

*“One of the most jarring effects of Covid-19 was that during the pandemic, we were all locked down; we were not even allowed to dine in at restaurants. Business owners were suddenly confronted with the reality that their strategy of physicality was not enough to build a sustainable business”.* - Mr Fong Wai Hong

*“While we at Lotus’s have had a positive experience, there are strengths unique to any (retail) channel, offline and online. What we need to do is to focus on what we want our customers to experience and deliver that expectation as best as we can.”* - Mr Kenneth Chuah

*“What does retail mean now and what will it mean in the future? Is conventional (brick and mortar) regarded as retail, and online (selling) not retail? This is a good opportunity for us to be looking at the retail sector as an eco-system than a linear distribution model. I believe that symbiotic collaboration is the way forward.”* - Mr Shafie Shamsuddin

*“The retail sector, including malls, is one of the worst-hit sectors during the pandemic, and we know this for a fact. Due to the lockdowns, the retail sector contracted about 16% in 2020, its worst performance since the Asian financial crisis.”* - Mr Firdaos Rosli

PLF CEO FORUM 2021

## Concurrent Session D

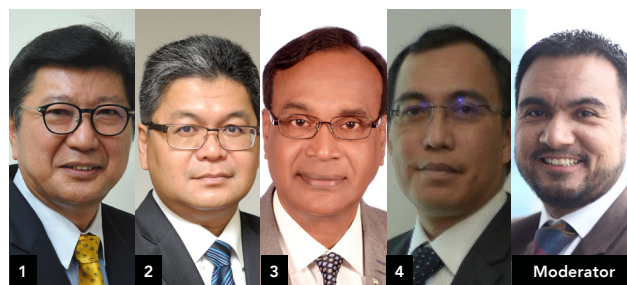
## "Building the Factory and Supply Chain of the Future"

Panel members from Session D discussed the way forward for the manufacturing and logistics industry, as well as the need to prepare in the event of another global crisis.

**Tan Sri Soh Thian Lai** of Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers (FMM), believes that both the manufacturing and logistics industry should focus on **attracting high technology** and value-added investments moving forward. One key area is to correct the industry's over-dependence on foreign labour. Moving forward, the industry should instead focus more on training and hiring local talents, especially those who completed Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET).

**Dato' Azman Shah** of Northport (Malaysia) Bhd highlighted the importance of building a **logistics ecosystem**, rather than standalone facilities. When building an industrial park, many things have to be taken into account such as location of factories, and ease of access to warehouses and ports. When a good ecosystem is in place, workflow would be much more efficient, with minimal delays and cost. Connectivity between the different eco-systems such as seaports, airports, land transport, and rail, is also crucial. Dato' Azman firmly believes that Malaysian ports have an edge over our closest competitors, including Singapore, due to this country's abundance of land and our state of the art infrastructure.

Adding on to the point about ecosystems, **Mr Krishnan Chelliah** of Federation of Malaysian Freight Forwarders said the ecosystem must also be high-tech, and stressed that the logistics industry needs to double down on digitalisation and automation, employing robotics in manufacturing, logistics, and other locations. Great ecosystems, paired with digitalisation and automation, will encourage investors to use Malaysia as their transport and logistics hub. Automation would also reduce the demand for labour, thereby reducing our reliance on foreign labour, a point that was echoed by **Mr Ibrahim Mohd Salleh** of MASKargo.



### PANELLISTS

- 1 Tan Sri Dato' Soh Thian Lai, President, Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers (FMM)
- 2 Dato' Azman Shah, Chief Executive Officer, Northport (Malaysia) Bhd
- 3 Mr. Krishnan Chelliah, Deputy President, Federation of Malaysian Freight Forwarders
- 4 Mr. Ibrahim Mohd Salleh, Chief Executive Officer, MASKargo

### MODERATOR

Mr Sudev Bangah, Managing Director, IDC ASEAN

*"What should Malaysian manufacturers do to prepare for another black swan event that could throw off a very delicate ecosystem?" - Mr Sudev Bangah*

*"It is not just about putting up buildings and factories, it is actually about creating an ecosystem and resolving the supply chain's pain points." - Dato' Azman Shah*

*"In Malaysia, we are currently too dependent on foreign labour. We need to develop our own talent pool." - Tan Sri Dato' Soh Thian Lai*

*"..the solution to reduce an over-reliance on foreign labour is going to be automation and robotics. Malaysia needs to introduce high-tech into the logistics industry to reduce our need for foreign labour." - Mr. Ibrahim Mohd Salleh*

*"The logistics and supply chain system has to evolve within the ecosystem. Digitalisation is necessary and should be enhanced." - Mr. Krishnan Chelliah*

Concurrent Session E

# “Is There a Jobs Crisis in Malaysia?”



The moderator for this session, **Mr Reza Ghazali** of Pederson & Partners, opened the session by stating that businesses have to pivot and adapt to digitalisation faster and more holistically in order to survive and continue to provide jobs. However, what are the current and emerging issues in employment in Malaysia? Are we heading in the right direction in terms of jobs creation and skills matching?

On the question of jobs, **Mr Mohd Syukri Ahmad Sudari** of the Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) pointed out that there is an **over-supply of fresh graduates** as companies are not hiring new employees due to market uncertainty, post-pandemic. The focus currently is on business recovery and as such, instead of expanding their workforce, employers are looking into improving work processes to increase the overall productivity of their current staff. On the skills side, Mr Syukri pointed out that language skills are among the most sought after, followed by analytical and critical-thinking skills.

**Mr Abd Qadir Hairi** of start-up SOLVNEX Digital Sdn Bhd argued that there had been a jobs crisis before the pandemic, especially among the youth. He added that the **youth unemployment** rate was already high and increased when the pandemic hit. With companies under severe pressure and downsizing their workforce, fresh graduates have to compete for jobs with retrenched workers with more experience. This is why many fresh grads are forced to take on low-wage freelancing work to make ends meet. High-paying gig or temporary jobs are few and far in between but his company hopes to change this by providing the platform for companies to outsource **higher-value temporary jobs** to graduates.

The issue of gender imbalance, pre and post-Covid, was brought into the discussion when **Dato’ Azlin Ahmad Shaharbi** of Peniagawati pointed out that women’s participation in the workforce was still low, and not helped by the lockdown-induced retrenchments. This was a persisting issue, she said, and there needs to be more incentives and inducements by the public and private sectors to **increase women’s participation and empowerment** especially at SME and micro-enterprise levels. With women making up nearly 60% of university students, it would make more business sense to

**PANELLISTS**

- 1 Mr Mohd Syukri Ahmad Sudari, Vice President, Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF)
- 2 Dato’ Azlin Ahmad Shaharbi, President, Peniagawati
- 3 Mr Abd Qadir Hairi Abu Hassan, Chief Executive Officer, SOLVNEX Digital Sdn Bhd
- 4 Dato’ Sri Dr Mohd Uzir, Chief Statistician Malaysia, Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM)

**MODERATOR**

Mr Reza Ghazali, Client Partner & the Head of ASEAN, Pederson & Partners

encourage and boost their participation in the economy, especially post-pandemic.

Malaysia’s Chief Statistician, **Dato’ Sri Dr Mohd Uzir**, added that a pre-existing issue was under-employment<sup>1</sup> which the pandemic only worsened. He did note, however, that despite multiple challenges in ensuring business continuity, most Malaysian employers would opt for retrenchment only as a last resort.

The panel concluded that there are underlying issues in Malaysia’s job market, especially among Malaysian youth, which the pandemic worsened. The silver lining is that the recovery is under way and more jobs, including higher-wage and higher-value jobs, will be available in the coming year. However, more needs to be done at policy level to address structural issues in Malaysian employment.

The full summary, as well as points raised by each panellist, will be made available at [www.perdanaceoforum.com](http://www.perdanaceoforum.com).

<sup>1</sup> The under-utilisation of employees whether due to a job-skills mismatch or lack of availability of full-time jobs



PLF CEO FORUM 2021

## Concurrent Session F

## “The Y Factor: How Youth are Impacting Business and Politics in Malaysia”

What does it mean to be a youth in today's day and age in Malaysia?

When asked how Malaysian youth are perceived by the older generation, **Ms Qyira Yusri** of Persatuan Pengundi Muda, said people often mistakenly assume that young people are a monolithic group with the same preferences and political inclinations but **young people are as diverse** as any other age group. She firmly believes that much like any other age group, youth members are shaped and influenced by their environment. A youth in Kuala Lumpur would not have the same outlook on life as those in East Malaysia. She is also of the opinion that young Malaysians have a lot to offer in business and politics but have not been given sufficient space nor the right platform.

**Mr Arif Tukiman** pointed out that the use of technology has affected how the youth think. He admitted that it makes them vulnerable to negative influence. He said that while it is great that the youth are learning to think for themselves, they must also learn from others in order for them to put their own DNA into a 'battlefield' full of more experienced players.

**Dr. Oh Ei Sun** stated that with the increase in political literacy and involvement, fresh ideas are being introduced into existing political parties, and are even creating new ones. **Young Malaysians know what kind of governance and leadership they want** to see in political parties and companies, and many are not afraid to voice their opinions, or call out impropriety. In this way, both Dr Ei Sun and Ms Qyira believe that political parties and businesses will have to change to remain relevant.



### PANELLISTS

- 1 Dr. Oh Ei Sun, Principal Advisor, Pacific Research Center of Malaysia
- 2 Miss Qyira Yusri, Co-Founder & Education Director, UNDI18, Persatuan Pengundi Muda
- 3 Mr. Arif Tukiman, Founder and CEO, RunCloud

### MODERATOR

Mr Eddin Khoo, Founder-Director, PUSAKA

*“The mistake that people often make is that people assume the young people or youth is a monolithic group in our society's demography”*- Ms Qyira Yusri

*“There's a lot of information that can have a negative impact on the youth as well as change the way they think about the future, themselves, and their career path.”*- Mr Arif Tukiman

*“What the youth are doing is basically shattering the old conventional networks of the politics of cabal and the politics of patronage.”*- Dr Oh Ei Sun

*“We don't know how impactful the pandemic has been and what it will require in terms of resources, imagination, and real resilience to meet the demands.”*  
- Mr Eddin Khoo

"The Malaysian morale has been badly dented these past two years. The various lockdowns, confusing SOPs, mounting infection and death rates, have all taken a toll on the Malaysian psyche. Instead of taking us out of the crisis, we were dragged into it deeper and deeper. It is clear that until and **unless the Government gets its act together** and stops making decisions for political gains, we will not get out of this rut. We are at a critical point in time when the government needs to inspire confidence, provide clear direction and political stability, and be committed to its vision of establishing a prosperous, inclusive, and sustainable Malaysia."



After his speech, Tun answered questions in a live online session moderated by **Datuk Dr Hamzah Kassim**, CEO and Co-Founder of the iA Group.

To the question of how to **restore decaying trust** in government, Tun put it bluntly that, "Today's government must be better informed, must have greater knowledge about new methods of doing things. We find that in many instances, the people who have been chosen are not competent and knowledgeable about new ways of doing things. We find that they are still using old methods which are no longer capable of delivering on the expectations of the people."

When asked whether it is possible for **Malaysia to be free of corruption** by 2030 as outlined in the National Anti-Corruption Plan, Tun was cautiously optimistic. "I think we can completely eliminate corruption. There would be some corruption but we can reduce



it to a tolerable degree. What needs to be done is to have a government that is totally dedicated to eradicating corruption. During elections, do not vote for people who offer bribes or who have a history of bribery. If you do that, bribery will be with us all the time. It is very important that in the next elections, Malaysians choose good people who are clean and who pledge to provide good governance free of corruption. Then, we will be on the way to eradicating corruption by the year 2030."

The Forum wrapped up after Tun's live Q & A which was broadcast from Perdana Leadership Foundation. Tun's full speech can be viewed online at <https://perdanaceoforum.com/>. Each session's notes are also available at the blog section of the website. The edited transcripts of the Forum will be digitally published in March 2022.



# Reframe the NEP Debate, or Be Deadlocked Another 50 Years

By Dr Lee Hwok Aun, Senior Fellow, IDEAS (Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs)

As 2021, the 50th anniversary of Malaysia’s New Economic Policy, draws to a close, some will say that five decades is not quite enough, others that half a century is way too long.

Malaysia has never resolved these differences, and habits of thought set up the country for another 50 years of deadlock. The “continue versus terminate NEP” debate can never reconcile — not just because the issue is sensitive, emotional and contentious, but because the clash itself stems from serious misconceptions.

Malaysia’s policy conversations should instead focus on the NEP’s underlying principles and enduring objectives. The more meaningful and constructive question is: How does Malaysia build on the NEP to safeguard equality and foster fairness in the decades to come?

Before that, we must consider — and dispel — **three misconceptions about the NEP.**

The first is a popular stance that Malaysia should stop the NEP and just help the poor of all races. “Poverty reduction irrespective of race” is actually the first of the NEP’s “two prongs”, so to call for the country to do this instead of the NEP is a contradiction.



Indeed, if there is one thing people unanimously agree on, it is that Malaysia should keep doing the NEP’s first prong.

More importantly, the NEP did a lot more than help the poor. Its second prong sought to restructure society so as to “eliminate the identification of race with economic function”. Unlike the first prong’s focus on basic well-being and social provisions for all, such as primary and secondary education, rural development and public healthcare, the second prong promoted bumiputera participation and achievement in four key areas: higher education, high-skilled

occupations and management, business, and wealth ownership. In contrast to the first prong’s universal provisions, the second prong operated through special, group-targeted measures such as quotas and preferential access.

The NEP aspired to make bumiputeras “full partners” in the economy, which entailed expanding bumiputera capability and competitiveness. This would enable them to participate in upper layers of the economy, increasing diversity and ethnic integration in specific places. These ultimate goals are fundamentally distinct from the first prong’s simple mission of poverty reduction.

In other words, Malaysia should continue doing both universal pro-poor policies, and targeted policies for identified groups. Indeed, it already runs special programmes that facilitate Orang Asli and Indian participation in higher education and entrepreneurship, and increase women's presence in decision-making positions. Advocating to eliminate bumiputera policies entails eliminating all these group-targeted programmes as well.

That is at best an inconsistency, at worst double standards.

The second misconception arises from the NEP's official timeframe of 1971-1990. Did the NEP promise to expire in 1990?

Emphatically, though perhaps surprisingly, the answer is "no". A careful reading of the NEP will see that there was never a clear commitment to terminate in 1990. A critical consideration of its implementation will realise that it was impossible for the entire edifice to be dismantled at one go. True to form, the NEP was succeeded only in name by the National Development Plan (NDP, 1991-2000), and every successive long-term plan has recommitted to the NEP.

The NEP was opaque and non-committal about what would happen in 1990. Moreover, its myriad programmes rolled out piecemeal through the 1970s and 1980s, not in one big bang in 1971. Its closure could not happen in one big bang in 1990. Even if it was possible to commit to a 20-year limit for special pro-bumiputera admissions, how can we subject Universiti Malaya, the only existing university in 1971, and Universiti Utara Malaysia, founded in 1984, to the same deadline of 1990? The discourse needs to move beyond sweeping generalisations and grievances, and deal with the complexities on a case-by-case basis.

The third misconception pertains to a popular claim: the NEP only benefits the Malay elite and has failed the Malay masses. The statement is demonstrably false: millions of Malay and bumiputera households have gained access to higher education and scholarships, micro, small and medium business loans, government and government-linked company (GLC) procurement,

and more. The policies have fallen short in grooming talent and enhancing capacity, but the distribution of benefits is unquestionably extensive.

Household income trends are instructive. Rich-poor disparities still need to be narrowed, but we should note that the most authoritative statistics, based on the nationwide Household Income Survey, show inequality declining in the past 15 years — with the bumiputera population experiencing a larger drop compared with the Chinese and Indian populations. In 2019, bumiputeras also recorded the smallest rich-poor gap of the three ethnic categories.

It may be convenient to presume that the system neglects ordinary people and only helps the elite, because this means that

abolishing it comes at no cost to real people. But it does. The system lavishly provides bumiputeras access to education, loans, employment, and upward mobility in general. Where it decisively falls short, again, is in cultivating capability, competitiveness and resourcefulness — such that the prospect of discontinued protection feels too disruptive and intimidating for the vast majority of the bumiputera, especially Malay, population.

NEP debates remain antagonised because critics habitually ignore the overwhelming Malay support for the NEP and their anxiety when people demand its removal — opinions that are repeatedly documented in opinion surveys. Calls to terminate the NEP overwhelmingly spring from the experiences and sentiments of minorities, but neglect to engage empathetically with the Malay society, who also have experiences and sentiments on the matter. At the same time, NEP advocates can be dismissive of the concerns of minorities towards unfair opportunity in certain areas, especially public university entry.

### **Can Malaysia break out of the polarised, 'continue versus terminate NEP' deadlock?**

One possible way is to build on the NEP's two prongs by establishing national principles. This approach acknowledges the NEP's strengths but also accounts

## **The NEP was opaque and non-committal about what would happen in 1990.**



for the ways that Malaysia has transformed since 1971. Everyone agrees with helping the poor, and the poverty rate of 50% in 1971 warranted poverty reduction as a defining national priority.

Malaysia in 2021 is thoroughly different. Poverty remains a problem, but increasingly, the country is confronted with larger challenges of public health provision, social protection, universal quality schooling and socioeconomic rights. Meanwhile, group-targeted policies that promote participation, achievement and diversity — targeting bumiputeras, and also Orang Asli,

Indians and minority ethnic groups, and women — have become increasingly accepted by society. The challenge for today is not to terminate these policies, but to clarify and enhance them, balancing majority and minority interests, and making the system more inclusive.

Building on the NEP's first prong, national policy can be guided by the principle of safeguarding equality, with a focus on well-being, dignity and rights. For the second social restructuring prong, a systematic

**One possible way is to build on the NEP's two prongs by establishing national principles.**

rethink involves reconfiguring the current massive bumiputera agenda and tokenism for minorities into an integrated system of group-targeted policies fostering participation, achievement and diversity — anchored on the principle of fairness.

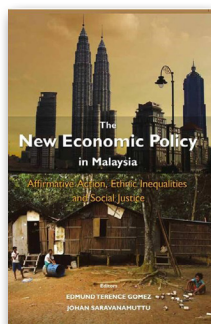
Of course, there is a mountain to be deliberated further, but isn't it better to work towards common ground instead of duelling over the non-issue of the NEP's expiry? The principles of equality and fairness are broad, deep and durable — and worth labouring for new compromise and consensus.

Dr Lee Hwok Aun is senior fellow at the Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (IDEAS), and senior fellow at the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute. This article is condensed from the author's IDEAS Policy Paper, "The NEP beyond 50: Assessing its Strengths and Weaknesses to Chart a Cohesive Malaysian Society" and was first published in The Edge Weekly, 2 December 2021. The article is reprinted with permission. The views expressed are the author's own.



# Books on the New Economic Policy

The NEP has been with us for over 50 years and in the course of that half-century, there have been many books about the policy. Here are a few titles from Perdana Library to deepen our understanding of the NEP.



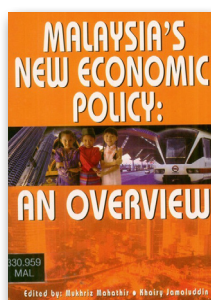
**Editors: Edmund Terrence Gomez & Johan Saravanamuttu**  
**Year of Publication: 2013**

Drawing on a wealth of statistical and documentary evidence, this book provides a comprehensive and rigorous assessment of the NEP. The contributors show that there have been some positive outcomes, among them a considerable reduction of poverty, greater interethnic equity parity and the emergence of a resourceful Bumiputera middle class. But these partial successes have to be weighed against persistent complaints associated with increasing intra-ethnic Bumiputera income disparities; the emergence of a small, politically powerful and disproportionately wealthy Bumiputera elite; a serious brain drain; and weak human capital. The New Economic Policy in Malaysia offers a timely and fresh perspective, suggesting that the long-term implementation of racially-targeted policies reinforces stereotypical ethnic identities and hinders the creation of a more inclusive society. The book also highlights the history of the Malay Sultanate in Malaysia.



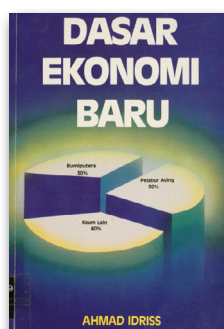
**Penulis: Just Faaland, Jack Parkinson & Rais Saniman**  
**Tahun Terbit: 2002**

Buku ini meninjau serta merumuskan pencapaian orang Melayu selepas 12 tahun pelaksanaan DEB. Pelan dokumen rasmi sepanjang tempoh DEB menjadi rujukan dalam mengkaji pencapaian dasar ini. Ini diharapkan memberi bukti kukuh terhadap pencapaian yang mengagumkan serta keazaman dan kemampuan kerajaan untuk memacu negara mencapai taraf yang lebih tinggi, sehingga menjadi contoh kepada negara luar. Edisi ini turut memuatkan tiga dokumen tambahan yang tidak dimuatkan semasa penerbitan edisi pertamanya, iaitu; Masalah Ketakseimbangan Ekonomi Bangsa dan Penyatuan Nasional, Kajian Sains Sosial untuk Penyatuan Nasional dan Pertumbuhan Ekonomi dan Ketaksamarataan Etnik 1957 hingga 2030 dan Masa Hadapan.



**Editors: Mukhriz Mahathir & Khairy Jamaluddin**  
**Year of Publication: 2003**

The racial riots of May 13, 1969 was a sad episode in the history of good ethnic relations in Malaysia. It led to the introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP), a comprehensive socio-economic policy, which formed part of the overall strategy of the second Prime Minister of Malaysia, to reunite and rebuild a new united Malaysian nation in diversity. The NEP has maintained political, social and economic stability, thereby strengthening civil society, the rule of law, democracy and human rights in the country. Based on this, Malaysia could conceivably achieve its developed country status by the year 2020. The experience of the NEP in Malaysia may have relevance also for other societies worldwide with problems of multi-ethnic economic rivalry and competition.



**Penulis: Ahmad Idriss**  
**Tahun Terbit: 1988**

Dasar Ekonomi Baru mengandungi tiga objektif penting. Pertama, menganalisis kesan dasar pembangunan ekonomi ruang dan wilayah dalam pelaksanaan DEB antara 1970-1990. Kedua, mengenalpasti sensitiviti dasar pembangunan yang dirumus daripada DEB di samping menyediakan maklumat tambahan bagi perpindahan penduduk. Ketiga, membincang rancangan-rancangan semasa DEB samada pelaksanaan ekonomi ruang secara jelas atau kesan ekonomi ruang dan wilayah yang baik tetapi tidak jelas terhadap sektor ekonomi.

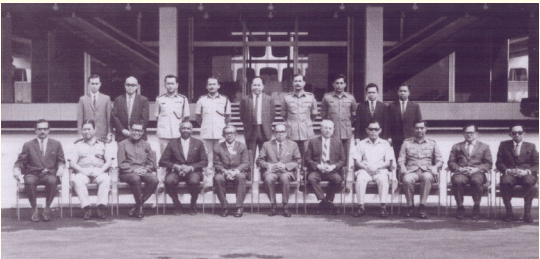


It has been more than fifty years since the New Economic Policy was introduced. A result of the 1969 racial riots in Kuala Lumpur, the NEP was introduced by Tun Abdul Razak, the second Prime Minister of Malaysia, in 1971. The policy was one of the proposals of MAGERAN, the National Operations Council (NOC) set up soon after the tragedy of 13th May 1969 when more than a hundred lives were lost and millions of property damaged in riots that tore apart the Chinese and Malay communities in Kuala Lumpur.

A state of emergency was declared and the running of the country was placed in the able hands of the NOC, led by Tun Abdul Razak, at the time the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia. The NOC's main task was to restore the country's administration under Parliament (it achieved this in an impressive 18 months) and to address the causes of the riots to prevent a recurrence. One of the main causes identified by the NOC was the economic imbalance between the races, but particularly between the mostly rural Malays and the mainly urban Chinese. Hence, the New Economic Policy was devised to overcome these imbalances and to remove the identification of race with economic activity. In 1990, the NEP was continued under Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's New Development Policy (NDP).

The success - or failure - of the NEP continues to be debated in Malaysia today. What cannot be denied is its role in reshaping the economic and business landscape of the country, albeit its present form may not have been what the members of the NOC had originally envisioned.

# Tun Abdul Razak Hussein and the New Economic Policy



## In Brief: Tun Abdul Razak Dato' Hussein, Second Prime Minister of Malaysia

Tun Abdul Razak, the 2nd Prime Minister of Malaysia, was the son of Dato' Hussein Mohd Taib and Teh Fatimah binti Daud. He graduated as an Utter Barrister from Lincoln's Inn, London, and entered politics after returning to Malaya in 1950. He was appointed as the Deputy President of UMNO in 1951, and joined Tunku Abdul Rahman in the negotiations to achieve independence from the British. Upon Malaya's independence in 1957, Tun Razak became Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Education. He became Malaysia's second Prime Minister in 1970, after Tunku Abdul Rahman stepped down.

He was known as a relentlessly hard-working leader. As Minister of Education, Tun Razak introduced night classes in rural areas

which by 1969, enabled more than three million Malaysians to become literate. Tun Razak was also known for introducing the Red Book in 1960 which was a five-year plan for rural development. A copy of the Red Book was placed in each State and District Operations Room established to carry out the plan, and Tun Razak - determined to see through the implementation of this plan - visited as many State and District Operations Rooms as he could, carrying his walking stick wherever he went. In 1962, he covered 43,000 miles and visited 45 State and 118 District Operations Rooms throughout the country. According to Tan Sri Thong Yaw Hong, who was the head of the Economic Planning Unit, Tun Razak's idea of development was that it be "far-reaching and permanent". (Tun Abdul Razak: Profile of a Patriot, Zainuddin Maidin).

His tenure as Prime Minister was a short five years. Unbeknown to Malaysians, Tun Abdul Razak was battling leukemia. He succumbed to the illness on 14th January 1976 and was laid to rest at the Heroes' Mausoleum in Kuala Lumpur. May he rest in peace.

A complete biography of Tun Abdul Razak is available at <https://www.perdana.org.my/pms-of-malaysia/tun-abdul-razak-dato-hussein/> and an interactive timeline can be found at <https://www.perdana.org.my/pms-of-malaysia/visual-timelines/prime-ministers-of-malaysia/>

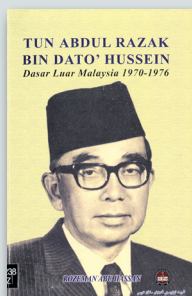


# Books on Tun Abdul Razak

You know his name, you've read about his achievements but do you know his story? We've curated a selection of books on Tun Abdul Razak Hussein, available here at the Perdana Library. If you are interested to read or borrow the books, contact us at 03-8885 8961 (Library Counter), or email us at [library@perdana.org.my](mailto:library@perdana.org.my)

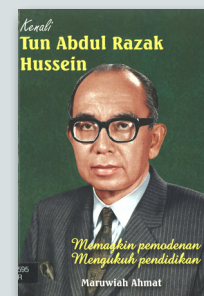
## Tun Abdul Razak bin Dato' Hussein: Dasar Luar Malaysia 1970-1976

Author: Rozeman Abu Hassan  
Year of Publication: 2003



## Kenali Tun Abdul Razak: Memangkin Pemodenan, Mengukuh Pendidikan

Author: Maruwiah Ahmat  
Year of Publication: 2010



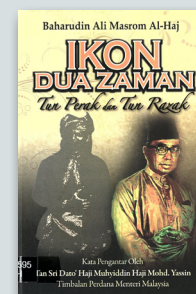
## Tun Razak Dalam Kenangan

Author: Arkib Negara Malaysia  
Year of Publication: 2011



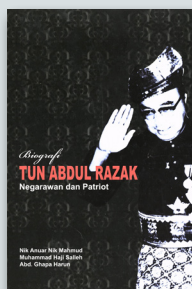
## Ikon Dua Zaman: Tun Perak dan Tun Razak

Author: Baharudin Ali Masrom Al-Haj  
Year of Publication: 2010



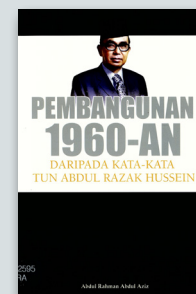
## Biografi Tun Abdul Razak: Negarawan dan Patriot

Author: Nik Anuar Nik Mahmud, Muhammad Haji Salleh & Abd. Ghapa Harun  
Year of Publication: 2011



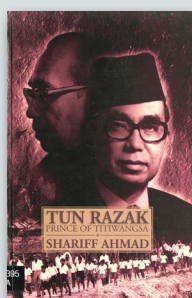
## Pembangunan 1960-an: Daripada Kata-kata Tun Abdul Razak Hussein

Author: Abdul Rahman Abdul Aziz  
Year of Publication: 2014



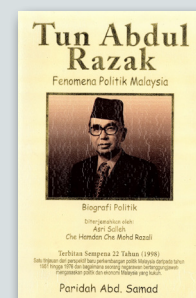
## Tun Razak: Prince of Setiawangsa

Author: Shariff Ahmad  
Year of Publication: 2001



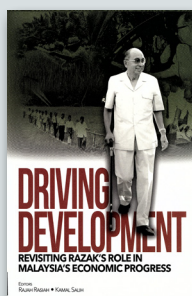
## 'Tun Abdul Razak: Fenomena Politik Malaysia': Sebuah Biografi Politik

Author: Paridah Abdul Samad  
Year of Publication: 2009



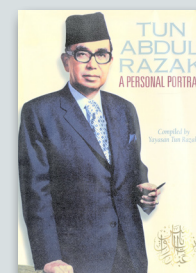
## Driving Development: Revisiting Razak's Role in Malaysia's Economic Progress

Editors: Rajah Rasiah & Kamal Salih  
Year of Publication: 2019



## Tun Abdul Razak: A Personal Portrait

Compiler: Yayasan Tun Razak  
Year of Publication: 2005



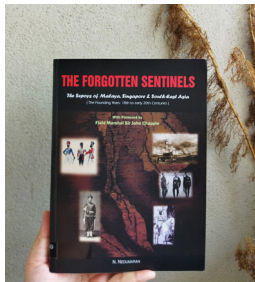
# Staff Book Picks

These past years haven't been easy for most of us mere mortals, so it's only normal for us to find some sort of escapism from the harsh realities of life. Some may find comfort in spending time watching movies and TV series, some in gardening, and most would agree that travelling (fortunately, we are finally able to!) is good for the soul.

Here at the Foundation, we recommend reading as a pastime pleasure - whether it be for escape into a different life or for knowledge (frequently both). Throughout 2021, we have had book recommendations from PLF staff. Here are the highlights.



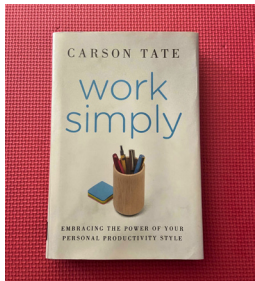
Our first book recommendation for the year came from Ms Nurshahafiqah Asli. She recommended **'Margaret Thatcher The Woman Within'**, a book on former UK Prime Minister, the late Margaret Thatcher, a strong role model for women everywhere. The book not only contained anecdotes about The Iron Lady but also revealed the softer side of Mrs Thatcher, a side rarely shown in public.



Ms Magdalena Lampas, our resident Transcriber, took us on a historical journey with her recommendation, **'The Forgotten Sentinels: The Sepoys of Malaya, Singapore & South-East Asia'**. The Sepoys were battalions of trained soldiers from India, sent to fight all over South-East Asia as reinforcements to British and local forces. The book highlighted the Sepoys' contribution to the many wars between the 18th and 20th century, and hailed them as the unsung heroes that they are.



If you're looking for a historical read, but from another side of the world, then this recommendation from Mr Faridzuan might be the one for you. Entitled, **'The Grand Louvre – From the Fortress to the Pyramid'**. An engineering marvel, a master of technical achievement, and some say, a defiance to the French norm, The Grand Louvre is one of the world's most iconic landmarks. This book unearths its 800 years history from being a fortress, to a residential palace, and finally to a world renowned museum.



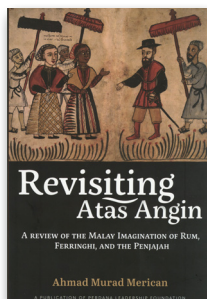
And finally, if you are looking for ways to improve work productivity, then we have just the book for you. Ms Nurul Humaira's recommendation is a book on personal productivity, **'Work Simply: Embracing the Power of Your Personal Productivity Style'**. It essentially boils down to 4 different styles; Arrangers, who think about their projects in terms of the people involved; Prioritisers, who are the definition of "goal-oriented"; Visualisers, who possess a unique ability to comprehend the big picture; and Planners, who live for the details. Which one are you?

There are, of course, many more books that we recommend from our Library, whether your interest is in Malaysian history, world affairs, or anything in between. If you would like to view all of the recommendations, head over to our blog (<https://www.perdana.org.my/blog/>) and filter for Staff Picks, and who knows, you may find that one book you never knew about that might just be the read you're looking for.

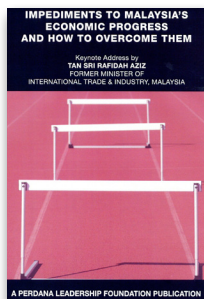


# Books and Merchandise @PLF

Perdana Leadership Foundation publishes and sells a range of books on leadership, history, and national issues. The books can be purchased directly from the Foundation by contacting Ms Magdalena Lampas (03-8885 8961/ [magdalena@perdana.org.my](mailto:magdalena@perdana.org.my)) or e-mailing [library@perdana.org.my](mailto:library@perdana.org.my). A selection of the books available are:



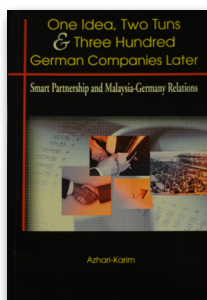
**Revisiting Atas Angin:**  
A Review of The Malay  
Imagination of Rum,  
Ferringi, And the Penjajah  
Author: Ahmad Murad  
Merican  
**RM55.00**



**Perdana Discourse Series 21\***  
"Impediments to Malaysia's  
Economic Progress and  
How to Overcome Them"  
Publisher: Perdana Leadership  
Foundation (PLF)  
**RM20.00**



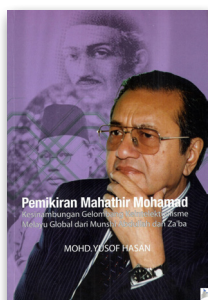
**Perdana Discourse Series 20\***  
"The Federal and The  
States: Federal State  
Relations in Malaysia"  
Publisher: Perdana Leadership  
Foundation (PLF)  
**RM15.00**



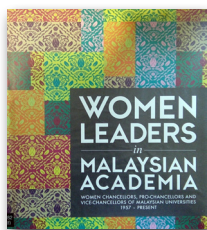
**One Idea, Two Tuns &  
Three Hundred German  
Companies Later: Smart  
Partnership and Malaysia  
-Germany Relations**  
Author: Azhari Karim  
**RM25.00**



**Pengisytiharan Malaysia  
Sebagai Negara Islam**  
Author: R.Sivapegerasan  
P. Rajanthiran  
**RM35.00**



**Pemikiran Mahathir  
Mohamad: Kesenambungan  
Gelombang  
Keintelektualisme Melayu  
Global dari Munshi  
Abdullah dan Za'ba**  
Author: Mohd Yusof Hasan  
**RM65.00**



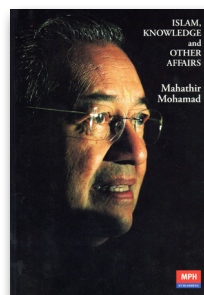
**Women Leaders In  
Malaysian Academia**  
(Coffee-table book with  
full colour photos) Women  
Chancellors, Pro-Chancellors  
And Vice-Chancellors Of  
Malaysian Universities  
1957 - Present  
Publisher: Perdana Leadership  
Foundation (PLF) / Multimedia  
University (MMU)  
**RM90.00**

\* Monographs of  
other Discourses  
are also available.

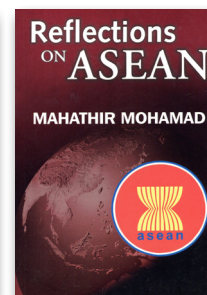
## Books by Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad:



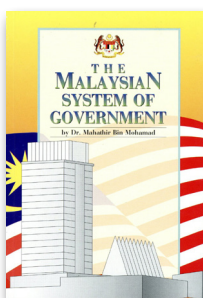
**A Doctor in The House:**  
The Memoirs of Tun Dr  
Mahathir Mohamad  
(also available in BM and  
Mandarin)  
**RM100.00**



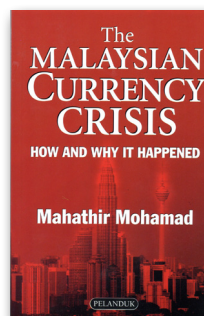
**Islam, Knowledge and  
Other Affairs**  
**RM50.00**



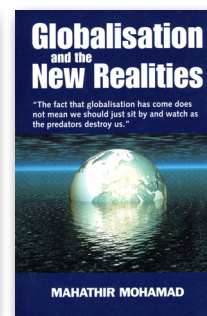
**Reflections on ASEAN**  
**RM33.00**



**The Malaysian System of  
Government**  
**RM10.00**



**The Malaysian Currency  
Crisis**  
**RM10.00**



**Globalisation & the  
New Realities (English)**  
**RM55.00 Hard Book Cover**  
**RM30.00 Paper Book Cover**

## PLF MERCHANDISE

<b>Notepad (Big)</b>	<b>RM8.00</b>
<b>Notebook (Ring) HBK</b>	<b>RM12.00</b>
(Buy 2 for RM20.00)	
<b>Notebook (Ring) PBK</b>	<b>RM8.00</b>
(Buy 2 for RM15.00)	
<b>Cardholder</b>	<b>RM 15.00</b>
<b>Pendrive 16GB</b>	<b>RM45.00</b>
<b>Pen</b>	<b>RM3.00</b>
<b>T-Shirt</b>	<b>RM33.00</b>





# A Short Pictorial Tour of PLF

Have you ever wondered what it's like to be in the compound of the Perdana Leadership Foundation? Or perhaps you miss being in our Perdana Library to read or study while enjoying the serene view of Putrajaya Lake. These photos give you a glimpse of Perdana Leadership Foundation. We reopened on 7th February 2022 (subject to strict SOPs) so do follow our Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/perdanaleadershipfoundation>) and Instagram [@plfperdana](#) to keep updated!



The room with a view: our Library's cosy reading area. Next to it are shelves stocked with thousands of titles covering Economics, History, and Politics.



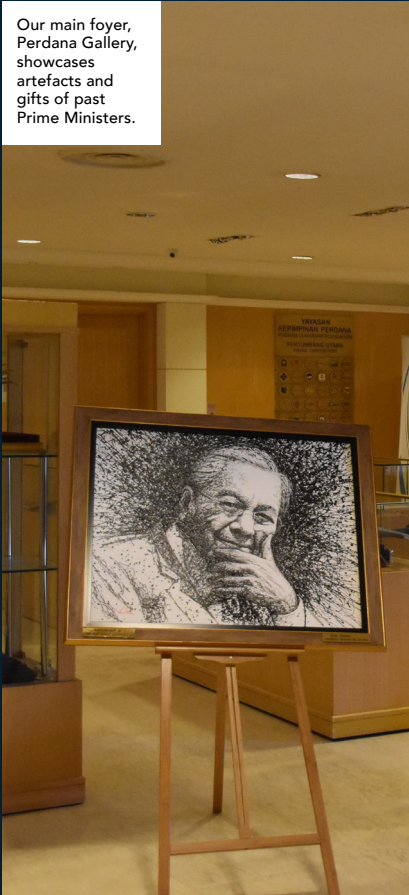
A sitting area for quiet discussions.



Our Library has a meeting room available for bookings for more robust conversations.



Another view from the Perdana Library.



Our main foyer, Perdana Gallery, showcases artefacts and gifts of past Prime Ministers.



Another view of Perdana Gallery.



Our sweeping central staircase leading up to our Honorary President's office.





# PERDANA LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION

[www.perdana.org.my](http://www.perdana.org.my)

Perdana Leadership Foundation was established in 2003 with the aim of preserving, researching, and disseminating materials on, and by, Malaysia's past Prime Ministers. Premised on the belief that past leadership can yield valuable insights for present and future development, the Foundation's objective is to increase awareness and appreciation of Malaysia's history and leadership legacy.

The Foundation's physical home in Precinct 8, Putrajaya, was completed in October 2003. The stately building now houses the Perdana Library, an auditorium as well as a multi-purpose hall in addition to the office of the Foundation's Honorary President who is the country's fourth and seventh Prime Minister, YABhg Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The Foundation operates a physical and electronic library, the Perdana Library, which provides access to information on Malaysia's past prime ministers. The library collects, organises, and preserves materials by and about Malaysia's national leaders and events connected to them, with particular emphasis on the policies, strategies and initiatives they adopted. The Library contains almost 12,000 physical

titles and more than 150,000 digital documents, comprising speeches, policy papers, and articles.

The Foundation's objectives are:

- To research, document, disseminate and publicise the intellectual legacies of Malaysia's past Prime Ministers.
- To create awareness of the development process of the nation and draw lessons from the nation's history to enhance future development.
- To illuminate the contributions of Malaysia's past Prime Ministers in the social, economic, and political development of the nation.
- To be a resource centre of policies, strategies, and initiatives that were adopted under Malaysia's various Prime Ministers which may be used and adapted as models for the development of other nations.

The Foundation also has a broader objective which is to promote global understanding by providing a channel for scholars and thinkers to undertake research and idea-sharing for lasting, peaceful resolutions.





## BECOME OUR MEMBER

Membership to the Perdana Library is free\*\* and members gain the

following benefits: use of our Library facilities, including Wi-Fi, during opening hours\*; E-mail requests for specialised searches; early invitations and discounts to selected public events. Visit [www.perdana.org.my](http://www.perdana.org.my) or scan the QR code to become a member.

\*Subject to Perdana Library being open to members of the public

\*\*Malaysians can become a member with book borrowing rights at only RM10 per year.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### PLF SME LEADERS PROGRAMME

Date: 25th May 2022

Venue: Perdana Leadership Foundation

Website: [www.perdanasmeleaders.com](http://www.perdanasmeleaders.com)

### PERDANA DISCOURSE SERIES 22

Date: May 2022

Venue: Perdana Leadership Foundation

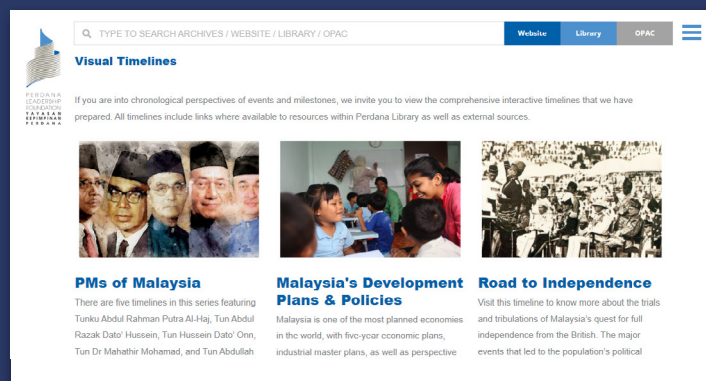
### PLF CEO FORUM 2022

Date: Sep/Oct 2022

### WORKSHOP ON LIBRARY OF CONGRESS SUBJECT HEADING (LCSH)

Date: October 2022

We post information on upcoming events on our Facebook page ([perdanaleadershipfoundation](https://www.facebook.com/perdanaleadershipfoundation)), so be sure to like our page and follow us! We are also on instagram [@plfperdana](https://www.instagram.com/plfperdana) and LinkedIn ([perdana-leadership-foundation](https://www.linkedin.com/company/perdana-leadership-foundation)).



## A RICH ONLINE RESOURCE

There are plenty of resources on Malaysia's Prime Ministers on [our website](http://our website), including an [interactive visual timeline](#), [infographics](#), and [podcasts](#). Our [Library's OPAC](#) is also available for you to search our vast repository.

