

Food for Thought

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TN50: WILL MALAYSIA BE RESOURCE RICH OR RESOURCE POOR IN 2050?

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Letter to Editor

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2020 is the year chosen to bring Malaysia into the exclusive club of developed nations. While many economic statistics can be used as a yardstick to measure our achievements, where are we heading?

Let us revisit the important elements that have silently supported our nation's growth. Together water, energy and environment played an important role in developing Malaysia as a nation and a robust economy. Vision 2020 was a general aim that came without detailed targets and how to strategically reach those targets. Therefore, more focus was placed on social and economic aspect of growth.

Basic elements of Sustainable Development include People (social), Profit (economy) and Planet (environment). In order to have a balanced growth as a nation, we need to take into account environment as a key player and a strong partner. Therefore, Association of Water and Energy Research Malaysia (AWER) would like to highlight some key points that the Government of Malaysia should consider to enhance the Transformasi Nasional 2050 (TN50). AWER is of the opinion that a committee which is neutral and apolitical to be formed to ensure TN50 implementation are followed through from now until 2050. We need also to boost Research and Development (R&D) to sustain the 'hunger' of the manufacturing sector in Malaysia. Some of the solution outlined by AWER will fit directly into increasing a 'built-in' R&D culture at all level.

The water sector needs the following solutions:

- I. Centralised Water Management Power - Raw water, treatment and supply of water as well as wastewater discharge must be placed under federal government and report directly to the Parliament of Malaysia. In a national level survey conducted by AWER (using Department of Statistic's sampling methodology), 72.86% of Malaysian supported AWER's suggestion to remove state governments' power to water resources and place it directly under Parliament if state governments fail to protect water catchment areas.
- II. Water Efficiency Labelling and Minimum Water Efficiency Standard - To impose "static water efficiency" mechanism in improving water demand management
- III. Upstream, Midstream and Downstream Water Resource Development - To allow more water resources development in the midstream and downstream zones which will enable reduction in raw water stress.
- IV. Pollution Reversal - Effective wastewater discharge standard based on pollution loading will be able to assist in pollution reduction as the carrying capacity of rivers are limited and over-burdened due to high population density and economic activity density.

The energy sector needs the following solutions:

- I. Centralised Biomass Processing Plants - Sporadic location of biomass resources makes it harder to build bigger capacity Renewable Energy power plants. Biomass conversion, extraction and streamlining final output are vital to make economic sense and become a world leader in cutting edge biomass solution. Malaysia has the highest potential in this aspect.
- II. Energy Efficiency (EE) and Minimum Energy Performance Standard (MEPS) - MEPS has been successfully implemented in Malaysia after AWER managed to convince the government of its long term benefits. Expanding both EE and MEPS is vital to reduce energy use in electricity usage, transportation and industrial process.
- III. Profiled Demand Management - SMART GRID must be fully utilised to ensure detailed electricity demand profiling is done. Via such detail data, specific demand management strategy for different profile of electricity users can be implemented (SMART demand management).
- IV. Energy Price Stabilisation Fund - Energy resources price are volatile and can be subject to cartel as Malaysia also depends on energy resource import. In addition to that, currency volatility will also be a major factor that affects affordable energy resource supply. Therefore, it is vital for Malaysia to establish Energy Price Stabilisation Fund to assist the consumers to absorb sudden shocks in energy resources price. This fund is not a form of subsidy.
- V. 20% Final Energy Use Target for Transportation Sector by 2050 - Public transportation as well as EE & MEPS in transportation sector will be able to reduce the current 45% final energy use in this sector to 20% by 2020.

Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation is another pillar of TN50 that must be adopted as the changes in dry and wet season affects livelihood and water security:

- I. Flood Mitigation - rate of increase in rainfall pattern and flooding must be included in flood mitigation planning and implementation to ensure these solutions withstand increase in flood occurrence.

- II. Drought and Dry Season Management - Dry season will be a major challenge to Malaysia as we move forward beyond 2020. Dam design must be robust and flexible to ensure we build dams in stages to optimise capital expenditure.
- III. Farm in Building - Farm in building and nearer to demand zones must be implemented to mitigate food security risk. Coupling these farms with renewable resources and water recycling will enable sustainable and cost effective farming.
- IV. Land-Use Planning Revamping - Rampant forested area loss will pose a huge water security risk to Malaysia. Increase in population and economic activities mandate more water catchment areas protection. This will also serve positively in managing local climate and reducing flood risk.
- V. Developing National Resources Stock Pile - It is high time that Malaysia begins National Resource Stock Pile. Coal stock pile has been successfully carried out in each coal power plants that reduce many risks. Resources such as crude oil, natural gas and metals contribute significantly to the development of our nation. A detailed mechanism must be developed to ensure we are able to manage our resources need and replenish our resource outflow due to export oriented economy.

Similarly, strategic national assets must be Malaysia owned. Foreign ownership of such assets cannot be more than 49% and assets related to water services cannot be owned by foreign entities at all. Developing services sector related to a strong manufacturing sector is the smart way forward for Malaysia. This approach will be similar to nations like Japan, South Korea and Germany. Developing 'stand alone' services sector on its own may not be a long term solution and such sectors are easily replaced by other emerging economies.

The world's future will be controlled by 'big brothers' that have military might or resource rich or both. A new type of colonisation will take shape. Countries without military might and resource rich will be 'enslaved' using resources. Water, energy and environment are key pillars that we need to protect for the future generation's survival. In TN50's planning, a full chapter must be dedicated to these respective key pillars.

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