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ANALYTICAL ASSESSMENT ON THE ACHIEVEMENTS AND FAILURES OF MALAYSIAN VISION 2020: SOME MANAGEMENT POLICY GUIDANCE FOR BRUNEI VISION 2035

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Abstract: *Vision 2020 is a Malaysian ideal introduced by the former Prime Minister of Malaysia Dato Seri Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad when tabling the Sixth Malaysia Plan in 1991. The vision calls for the nation to achieve a self-sufficient industrialized nation in the year 2020, encompasses all aspects of life, from economic prosperity, social well-being, world class educational, political stability, as well as psychological balance. His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan Negara Brunei Darussalam consented to this long-term vision, which is known as the Brunei Vision 2035. This vision aspires that by 2035, Brunei Darussalam develops into a nation which will be widely recognized for the accomplishment of its educated and highly skilled people measured by the highest international standards; quality of life that is among the Top 10 nations in the world and a dynamic and sustainable economy with income per capita within the Top 10 countries in the world. This paper critically analyzed the achievements and failures of Malaysian Vision 2020 in order to extract some meaningful lessons for Brunei policy makers in managing its Brunei Vision 2035.*

Keywords: *Malaysian Vision2020, Brunei Vision 2035, developed, thrusts, challenge, prosperous, progressive*

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INTRODUCTION

Visionary leaders would establish a vision as a guiding element in their leadership process. A well-established vision provided clear steps that need to be followed through in order to achieve the ultimate goals. Malaysian Vision 2020 which is known in Malay "Wawasan 2020" was launched by Tun Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia, at the Malaysian Business Council2020 is to make Malaysia reaching the status of fully developed country. The Vision 2020 statement is (Rahman, 1993):

> "By the year 2020, Malaysia is to be a united nation, with a confident Malaysian society, infused by strong moral and ethical values, living in a society that is democratic, liberal, caring, economically just and equitable, progressive, and prosperous, and in full possession of an economy that is competitive, dynamic, robust and resilient (p. 271)."

In the officiating speech by the Deputy Prime Minister in the first ever National Seminar on Vision 2020, Tun Abdul Ghafar Baba, emphasized that Malaysia must expand the concept of development which should encompass other aspects than just economics, including politics, social, spiritual, psychological as well as cultural. He further reiterated that Malaysia must strive to mold a united, confident, socially just and politically stable society, in which everybody has an equal opportunity and has a strong sense of pride in being a Malaysian. In short, Vision 2020 reflects the vision of a fully developed and industrialized Malaysia by the year 2020, in all dimensions. Tun Mahathir envisioned that Malaysia be fully developed in terms of national unity and social cohesion, in terms of our economy, social justice, political stability, system of governance, quality of life, cultural and spiritual values, national pride and confidence.

Malaysia Way Forward – Vision *2020*

To achieve Vision 2020, Tun Mahathir lamented that the Malaysia required a steady annual growth of 7% (in real terms) over the thirty-year period 1990–2020, so that the economy would be eightfold stronger than its 1990 GDP of RM115 billion. This would translate to a GDP of RM920 billion (in 1990 Ringgit terms) in 2020 Under Vision 2020 from 1991 to 2020, there are 3 different 10--Year Development Policy namely National Development Policy 1991-2000 with OPP2, National Vision Policy 2001-2010 with OPP3 and New Economic Model 2011-2020 with National Transformation Program (Mohamed, 2008).

Mahathir outlined **nine strategic thrusts/challenges** that Malaysia must overcome to achieve Vision 2020 (Dudely, 2020):

Thrust 1: Establishing a united Malaysian nation made up of one *Bangsa* Malaysia (Malaysian Race).
Thrust 2: Creating a psychologically liberated, secure and developed Malaysian society.
Thrust 3: Fostering and developing a mature democratic society.
Thrust 4: Establishing a fully moral and ethical society.
Thrust 5: Establishing a matured liberal and tolerant society.
Thrust 6: Establishing a scientific and progressive society.
Thrust 7: Establishing a fully caring society.
Thrust 8: Ensuring an economically just society, in which there is a fair and equitable distribution of the wealth of the nation.

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Thrust 9: Establishing a prosperous society with an economy that is fully competitive, dynamic, robust, and resilient.

By the year 2020, Malaysia is hoping to reach its height as a united nation, a Malaysian society with a confident future outlook, enveloped by high moral standards and ethical values, a vibrant and democratic governing system, liberal and tolerant, caring, economically just and equitable, progressive and prosperous. The country also enjoys an economy that is competitive, dynamic, robust, and resilient. This Vision 2020 strongly belief that there can be no fully developed Malaysia until the country has finally overcome the nine central strategic challenges that have been the major stumbling blocks from the moment of its birth as an independent nation.

The first of these is the challenge of establishing a united Malaysian nation with asense of belonging as one nation with a common shared destiny. This must be a nation with a real feeling of peace and the fabric of multi-ethnic groups are strongly integrated, living in harmony and mutual respect with a spirit one '*Bangsa* Malaysia', and a strong sense of political loyalty and dedication to the nation.

The second is the challenge of creating a psychologically liberated, secured, and developed Malaysian society with faith and confidence in itself, justifiably proud of what it is, of that it has accomplished, resilient enough to face all possible adversities. This Malaysian society must be distinguished by the pursuit of excellence based on meritocracy, fully aware of all its potentials, psychologically strong to compete with others globally, and projected a good image to other people of other nations.

The third challenge Malaysia must face is that of fostering and developing a matured and evolved democratic society practicing a form of grown consensual, community- based Malaysian democracy that can be a model for many other developing countries.

The fourth is the challenge of establishing a society which is bonded by moral and ethical value systems, whose citizens are strongly-inclined towards religions and spiritual practices and in calculated with the highest of ethical standards.

The fifth challenge is establishing a matured, liberal, progressive yet a tolerant society in which Malaysians of all colors and creeds are free to practice and profess their religious beliefs, customs and traditions, cultural orientations and yet feeling that they are respected and belong to a one nation.

The sixth is the challenge of establishing a scientific and progressive society, where innovation is the essence for the society to develop scientific advancement and technological civilization in the future.

The seventh challenge is to nurture a fully caring society which recognize communal spirit over individualism, where the welfare of the people will revolve around a strong and resilient family.

The eighth is the challenge of ensuring an economically-just society where there is a society in which a fair and equitable distribution of the wealth of the nation is provided. There is full partnership in economic progress among the people regardless ofrace and color. Such a society cannot be in place so long as there is the identification of race with economic function and/or the identification of economic backwardness with race.

The ninth challenge is the ability to establish a prosperous society, with an

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economy that is fully competitive, dynamic, robust, and resilient. Since Independence in 1957, Malaysia has strived hard and already come a long way towards the fulfilment of this 9th thrust of Vision 2020.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of the Malaysian Vision 2020's Achievements and Failures

The analysis will be focused on the nine main thrusts of Malaysian Vision 2020:

The Establishment of a United Malaysian Nation, Bangsa Malaysia, ethnically integrated, at peace with itself.

This primary goal of Vision 2020 now appears to be the biggest failure. Although after General Election 14, the new governing coalition includes multi-ethnic parties, the social divides between Malay race and non-Malays have generally become wider, driven in part by increased conformity to religious rules urged on Malays by official and unofficial pressures.

In this respect, we must also acknowledge that Malaysia has not done well towards a united Bangsa Malaysia, in managing polarization over race and religion, and undertaking social and political reforms. These polarizing issues have scuttled efforts to implement the much-needed institutional and economic reforms, while simultaneously fueling political instability. What is most worrying is that with polarization increasingly permeating through our society, it endangers inter-ethnic harmony and erodes social cohesiveness. The very fabric of our society is in danger when we fail to see eye-to-eye and respect one another.

A lot of this has been scuttled by the political scenario in the country. Things have become so toxic that politicians now top the list of those who fan racial and religious tensions. This is true whether it was the BN (Barisan Nasional) or PH (Pakatan Harapan) or the PN (Perikatan Nasional) government in charge. The race baiting has not ended, it has worsened. It is now seen as a major political tool and if there is no political will and real courage and determination to end this by the ruling and political elite, we will be looking at a very uncertain future.

Creating a psychologically liberated Malaysian Society with faith and confidence, distinguished by the pursuit of excellence and respected abroad.

The pursuit of excellence seems a distant dream given the present status of higher education in the country and the widespread of malpractices and corruption in politics and administration since 1990. Malaysia may be generally liked by foreign investors but respect has taken a severe twist from the multi-billion dollars scandals involving 1MDB (1Malaysia Development Berhad). The disappearance of Malaysian Airlines' flight MH370, which appears to have been deliberately flown into the sea by the pilot after incapacitating the crew and passengers through oxygen starvation add salt to the wound. Foreigners are largely directly unaffected by the impact of official religiosity but can observe its negative impact on society.

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Fostering a mature democratic society, consensual and community-oriented and a model for other developing countries

The 2018 General Election showed that democratic spirit remains alive and despite its many flaws can still claim to be one of the better examples in Asia, at least compared with near neighbors such as Thailand, Vietnam, and Myanmar. The question is more whether the democratic ways can produce better governance or a society in which, corruption and ethnic extremism dominate.

This requires loyal opposition. Democracy requires opposing points of view. Then and only then do we get the best. The challenge we have in Malaysia is that those in positions of power and responsibility are reluctant to listen to any other than their personal advisors or those who have privileged access through various channels. Absolute power corrupts more than any other form of corruption. To be an example for others, we must first be an example to ourselves. Our nation currently chairs the Organization of Islamic countries, the Non-Aligned Movement and ASEAN. We must speak out against injustice wherever we see it. The excuse of "silence" or "non-interference in the internal affairs of another nation" is unacceptable for a nation that wishes to be a standard setter for others. Malaysia must work harder to be more prominent in the international stage as an advocator for significant global issues.

Establishing a moral and ethical society whose citizens are strong in spiritual and religious values.

Despite, or because of, the increased official role of the state in promoting one religion, it would be hard to conclude that there has been any improvement in the promotion of these values. Indeed, the incidences corruption at individual and institutional levels have certainly increased and it remains to be seen whether the ending of the dominance of the corruption-ridden United Malays National Organization in Malaysian political arena can reverse that drift.

Unfortunately, so long as our nation faces the problems of corruption, political instability, lack of transparency in governance and lack of rule of law, we will continue a downward spiral as investors, both local and foreign, will shy away. Our country cannot afford a repeat of the financial scandals of the past. We are a nation blessed with natural resources, an ideal location along trade routes, high proficiency in English, and so on. But even these resources are finite, and as we saw with the Fitch downgrade, the consequences of poor management eventually come to a head.

Corruption is creeping back with a vengeance, covering both the public and private sectors. Anybody who denies that corruption is not endemic in the government and even the business sector is living in a fantasy world and in self-denial.

Establishing a mature, liberal, and tolerant society in which Malaysian of all colors and creeds are free to practice their customs and religious beliefs while feeling part of one nation.

It is hard to envisage improvement here. Although Malaysia remains a broadly tolerant society, Malays are more constrained by official and informal restraints on their freedoms imposed in the name of a state-defined religious orthodoxy. Muslim minorities as well as Christians and Hindus have been significantly disadvantaged as the

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constitutional status of Islam is abused by officials and politicians.

Malaysians must understand that goodwill, harmony, and unity cannot be achieved through legislation. Managing race relations must start with the individual. If there is goodwill, harmony and unity in a person's thoughts, emotions, and actions it will be reflected in how he or she treated others. Malaysian former Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak echoed that racial and religious differences, skin color and cultures should not be obstacles to unity, as, in principle, all races had the same aims and desires in life, which was to live in peace and happiness. It requires a constant level of sensitivity and foresight to manage a multi-racial and multi-religious country like Malaysia (Sennyah & Sharmini, 2005).

Establishing a scientific and progressive society, not only as a consumer but asa contributor to science and technology.

Technology may be transforming Malaysia into a digital economy, but the country needs to overcome several key challenges to rise above the expectations. Against this backdrop, the Malaysian government has embarked on a concrete initiative to spur the digital economy, such as promoting technology adoption among businesses and encouraging digital entrepreneurship.

These efforts are starting to pay off. According to Malaysia's Department of Statistics, the digital economy contributed 18.3% to the nation's GDP in 2017 and is slated to reach a stretched target of 20% by 2020. This is according to The World Bank, which put Malaysia in the league of high-income economies with high adoption of digital technology. The country also ranks higher than roughly a third of Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries.

As an active consumer of many new advance technologies, Malaysia has not lagged any further behind the most advanced countries. Indeed, in some areas such as telecommunications and public health, it has done at least as well as most of its regional peers. However, it has yet to make any significant contributions to science or technology as university standards have lagged. A lot of incidences of brain-drained where many of the brilliant scientists have migrated overseas and the nation relies mainly on expatriates for advanced research and high-tech manufacturing and development investment.

Despite its successes, Malaysia I still am quipped as the middle child syndrome in the region. Malaysia keeps on developing, but comparison with her neighbor's is inevitable. Malaysia lacks the sheer population size of Indonesia, for instance, and need to address talent development, digitalization of traditional industry sectors, and other challenges. However, technology is not the sole answer and for sure the Governments cannot do it alone. Public-private partnerships must be encouraged since they are ideal platforms to ramp up and scale up the projects that are proving fruitful. Another real key is that every Malaysian must be included when a nation embarks on real digital transformation.

A "fully caring Society" with welfare based on the family rather than state or individual.

Indeed, a "fully caring society" is a nice phrase which is easy to proclaim but difficult to measure. Welfare policies instituted by government strongly encourage

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women to participate in the workforce while supporting childcare facilities ti be provided near the working premises. However, the position of women has been affected by the increased power and influence of male dominated religious institutions and authorities. Application of sharia laws especially on divorce issues and women's rights such as sexual abuse and domestic violence are seen to fall more harshly on women than men – particularly Malay elite men.

A "caring" society is one where people put the good of the community over their own selfishness. It is one that looks after its people and places everyone on an equal footing so that nobody is left behind. In general, Malaysia is a caring society. Perhaps more now than ever before. In 2020, the slogan "Malaysia Prihatin" (Malaysia Cares) was used on National Day — an acknowledgement of something we've seen embodied by Malaysians from all walks of life during this terrible pandemic. For every story of some selfish guy flouting quarantine, we've seen a dozen more about people bringing food supplies to rural areas, providing financial assistance to those in need and donating generously to support our frontline workers.

An economically just society in which there is a fair and equitable distribution of wealth which cannot exist while there is identification of race with economicfunction.

Significant progress in this regard has been mixed in Malaysian scenario. In most of the developing world, economic power is largely concentrated among the handful few hands of a "market-dominant" ethnic minority. The classic case is in the case of Southeast Asia, where the Chinese ethnic group, usually a small proportion of the population, dominated the biggest chunk of the economic cake. In Malaysia, the average Chinese household had 1.9 times as much wealth as the Bumiputera (Malays); in the Philippines, the Chinese account for 1 per cent of the population and well over half the wealth (Khalid & Li Yang, 2019).

Malaysia could proclaim more success stories than most countries in managing relative inequality. The Gini index of household incomes fell from 0.51 in 1970 to 0.40 in 2016; for developing countries, average inequality has been roughly unchanged over a similar period. However, one should not confuse relative inequality with absolute inequality.

Figure 1 shows both the standard relative Gini index based on household incomes (which frequently used as a yardstick by Department of Statistics) and the corresponding absolute index, based on the mean absolute gaps between all pairs of households. There exists a marked rise in absolute inequality (Ravallion, 2019).

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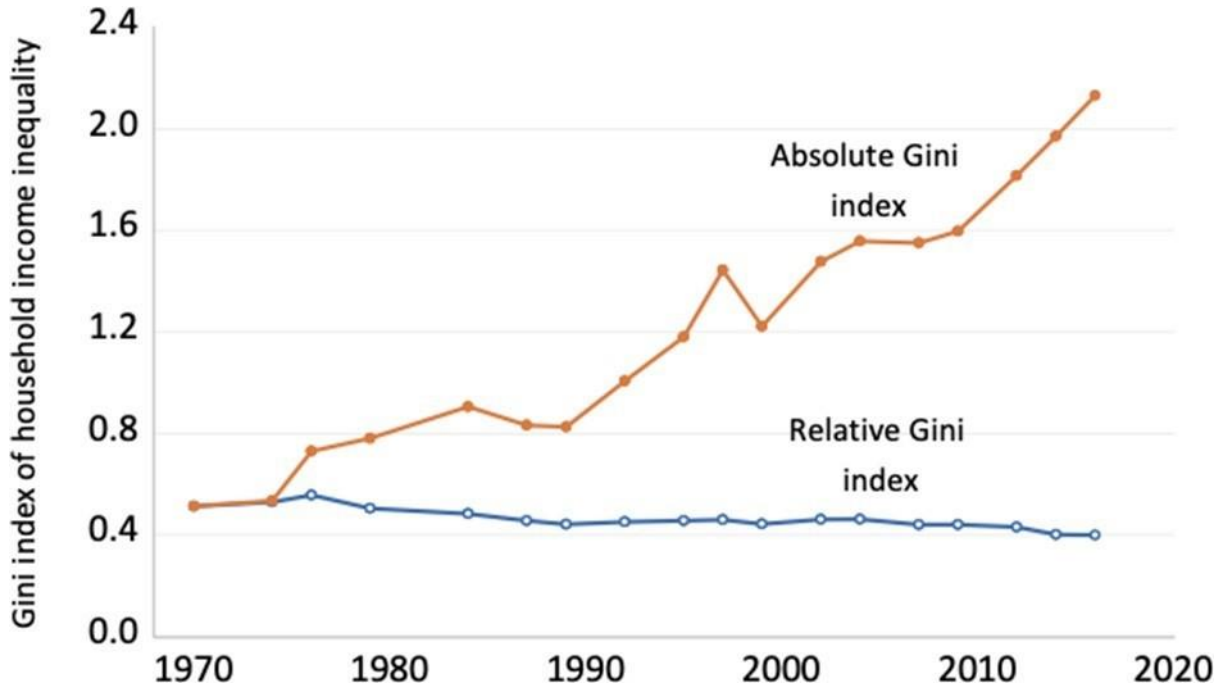

***Figure 1*: The standard relative Gini index based on household incomes**

The ethnic differential in growth rates has not been enough to attenuate the large absolute gaps in mean incomes by ethnicity, given the extent of the initial ethnic inequality. Relative ethnic inequality has fallen steadily, but absolute ethnic inequality has risen. The data do not substantiate the conclusion that the (absolute) income gap between Malays and Chinese- and Indian-Malaysians has narrowed down dramatically; indeed, one might be more inclined to claim that the gap has risen dramatically over the longer term.

A prosperous society with a competitive, dynamic economy.

Evidently, economic prosperity has encouragingly continued but at a much slower pace since 1997 and far from sufficient to reach a developed country status by 2020. In real terms, it is safe to claim that the economy has grown by roughly 4.7% a year since the Asian monetary crisis.

Malaysia Labor Productivity improved by 0.45 % in March 2021, compared with a drop of 2.86 % in the previous quarter. Malaysia Labor Productivity Growth data is updated quarterly, available from Mar 2001 to Mar 2021, averaging at 2.40 %. The data reached an all-time high of 7.69 % in Dec 2002 and a record low of -16.14 % in Jun 2020 (CEIC Data, 2021).

The rate of productivity growth has been very modest even though there has been a steady shift from agriculture and manufacturing into the service sector where value- added should be higher.

The fundamental problem that Malaysia faces now as thirty and fifty years ago is the challenge to reconcile the equality goals in the thrust 8 and the demands of thrusts 2 and 6 – the desire to be excellent and at the same time to advance in the forefront of science and technology.

That reconciliation is very essential in order to accomplish thrust number 1 – a

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united *Bangsa* Malaysia. The pressure on the present government, Perikatan Nasional (PN) government to chart the path for raising the economic status of Malays is directly in conflict with speedy technological and economic progress.

Share ownership for Malays has not grown as fast as planned in recent years but this is mainly because of the increased percentage of shares owned by foreign investors (45%) as foreign capital were behind the establishments of many newly founded industries. There has been a slow growth of small and medium enterprises despite many kinds of incentives and policies favored the Malays.

Significant numbers of the failures may be attributable to corruption, notably the previous government (National Front Coalition). However honest assessment would look as much at standards as numbers when focusing on the need for higher skills and investment in new technologies. There has been a huge expansion in publicly funded higher education institutions and universities. Almost 1.3 million Malaysian youths are pursuing tertiary education; 500,000 are enrolled in the 20 public universities and more than 600,000 are registered in private higher learning institutions. The tertiary enrolment growth scenario demonstrates that the Education Ministry is deeply committed in bringing the country on a par with the highest tertiary enrolment levels in Asean today (Tapsir, 2019). According to THE World University Rankings 2021, the Universiti of Malaya, believed to be the best, ranks number seventy (70).

Brunei Darussalam Way Forward – Vision 2035

In its effort to stimulate economic growth, His Majesty's government is actively promoting the development of various target sectors through its five-year National Development Plans. These outline the distribution of government funding and the budget allocated for development in various sectors of the country.

The current Development Plan marks a strategic shift in the planning and implementation of development projects, as it is the first national development plan to have been formulated in line with the objectives of Brunei Darussalam's recently launched long-term development plan, better known as "Wawasan Brunei 2035", or "Brunei Vision 2035".

Wawasan Brunei 2035 or Brunei Vision 2035 which was inaugurated by the Government of His Majesty the Sultan in 2007, aims to turn Brunei Darussalam into a nation widely recognized for (Prime Minister's Office, 2021):

- The accomplishments of its well-educated and highly-skilled people as measuredby the highest international standard;
- Quality of life that is among the top 10 nations in the world; and
- Dynamic and sustainable economy with income per capita within the top countries in the world.

To accomplish the above goals, eight strategies have been identified as follows (Kon, 2021):

- An education strategy that will prepare the youth for employment and achievement in a world that is increasingly competitive and knowledge-based.
- An economic strategy that will create new employment for the people and

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expand business opportunities within Brunei through the promotion of investment, foreign and domestic, both in downstream industries as well as in economic clusters beyond the oil and gas industry.

- A security strategy that will safeguard Brunei's political stability and sovereignty as a nation which links the defense and diplomatic capabilities and its capacity to respond to threats from disease and natural catastrophe.
- An institutional development strategy that will enhance good governance in both the public and private sectors, high quality public services, modern and pragmatic legal and regulatory frameworks and efficient government procedures that entail a minimum of bureaucratic "red tape."
- A local business development strategy that will enhance opportunities for local small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) as well as enable Brunei Malays to achieve leadership in business and industry by developing greater competitive strength.
- An infrastructure development strategy that will ensure continued investment by government and through public-private sector partnership in developing and maintaining world-class infrastructure with special emphasis placed on education, health and industry.
- A social security strategy that ensures that, as the nation prospers, all citizens are properly cared for.
- An environmental strategy that ensures the proper conservation of our natural environment and cultural habitat. It will provide health and safety in line with the highest international practices.

In order to realize the Brunei Vision 2035, the strategies listed above will need to be developed by both government and private bodies and implemented as a well-coordinated national strategy.

Recommendations for Policy Makers in Managing Brunei Vision 2035

The first thing that Brunei should have learnt from Malaysia Vision 2020, is to be firmly clear that Brunei Vison 2035 developmental journey must never meant to be totally only about economic growth. Rather, it aimed to make Brunei a developed nation, in every sense — democratic, ethnical, liberal, scientific, caring, inclusive and competitive.

Lost-sighted on this aspect will create imbalance and lop-sidedness in Brunei developmental efforts. The Vision 2035 was supposed to look beyond these economic numerical values.

- Although the Brunei Vision 2035 is still far away, the policy makers must make plans and act for a better tomorrow. They must remember that times flies very fast and so much needs to be done in order to realize the main thrusts of the Vision. Do not allow everyone involved to have a laissez-faire attitude in order to avoid falling into the same trap as Malaysia Vision 2020.
- People of Brunei at all levels should be encouraged to participate and play their parts in changing the tide of the country. The grass is greener if it were given water; and the people have significant roles in advancing Brunei beyond

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Vision 2035.

- Much needs to be done in addressing structural weaknesses and impediments that constrained Brunei's advancement towards a highly competitive nation. Reliance on low-skill foreign labor is one key factor. There is not much incentives to automate or use technology to move up the value chain, simply because there is an abundance of cheap foreign labor.
- More SMEs in Brunei should be encouraged by giving financial assistance and incentives to use technology in improving their business processes. The government also needs to address the under-investment in ICT (information and communication technology in the country), both in terms of input as well as output.
- More awareness programs must be launched to keep abreast the population at all levels about the progress and at the same time to encourage their participation in the efforts.

Conclusion

Achieving the status of a developed country is a common vision to many developing nations. Countries like Malaysia and Brunei have even set up a specific timeline (which is 2020 versus 2035) to reach at the milestone. Unfortunately, with all the genuine intention, the Vision 2020 had mixed results. In the case of Brunei, the final outcomes are yet to be observed. It is crystal clear that the Visons of both countries were not only focused on economical aspect; but serious attention need to be emphasized on human resource development. Both governments should play a dual role in managing their Visions successfully. In one hand, they should play their traditional role in strengthening economy, ensuring quality education to their people and maintain law and order. On the other hand, they should make the people ready to face the challenges ahead and take the necessary steps to address them successfully. Ultimately, it will be Malaysians and Bruneians themselves who will be the judge of whether the countries have achieved their Visons respectively.

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