

## The last sprint

Professor Tan Sri Dato' Dzul kifli Abd Razak

Comment

New Sunday Times - 01/03/2010

IF we are on a Wawasan 2020 100-metre sprint, we have just entered the last 30 metres of the race.



We should have gained enough momentum by now to dash forward with much confidence to win.

We can almost hear the cheers on the sidelines to ensure that we are kept motivated and focused.

There is no obstacle that could stop us from achieving that one mission we have set for ourselves.

Yes, we have less than a decade to make it a reality.

How sure we are of victory can perhaps be gauged from the confidence of those who are 20 years of age today -- the Wawasan 2020 generation as it were!

How many of them are into the Wawasan 2020 mode of thinking, of "creating our own mould"?

What about the nine challenges so ably crafted that Wawasan 2020 is hailed as one of its kind -- the embodiment of not only the economic dimension, but also the socio-cultural, moral and spiritual ones, which are not often addressed comprehensively in national blueprints?

The generation who envisioned the "Malaysian dream" must also be in the position to guide others in search of this new identity as a *bangsa Malaysia* -- the first challenge of Wawasan 2020.

After all, many of the Wawasan generation would have gone through at least nine years of schooling -- some would be finishing their tertiary education in a few years and assume the position of lead generation towards the idealism of Wawasan 2020.

This means that two decades ago, we should have had an entire education system geared up and streamlined to meet all the challenges in 2020. Is it so?

Just take the sixth challenge of "establishing a scientific and progressive society, one that is innovative and forward-looking; one that is not only a consumer of technology but also a contributor to the scientific and technological civilisation of the future".

How much have we been "contributing" rather than "consuming" technology? What else is there in the context of "civilisation of the future"?

We can only hope we have built enough capacities and capabilities in the last two decades for them to blossom in the next decade!

That 2010 is the Year of Creativity and Innovation should be a springboard for this to happen.

Have we been preparing the track for the ultimate sprint?

Or is the track still full of obstacles despite us running a 100-metre dash and not a 110-metre hurdle? More so today when winning is about the "survival of the fastest" and not just the "fittest".

Where hurdles are not needed, let us get rid of them, and soon.

Of these "hurdles", mindsets are the toughest to lose; if there is no change in that, there is no point in competing because we will lose anyway!

Like it or not, we are back to the question of education, nationally and globally.

The seriousness of the situation could be gauged from what Switzerland's World Innovation Foundation Charity executive director David Hall wrote recently in response to the Copenhagen Agreement.

He stated: "Overall we are heading towards a time when solutions cannot be found, since time literally runs out for us to do anything about our dire state."

So much for civilisation of the future!

According to Hill, "in another 40 years we shall just not have the time to solve anything other than to suffer the consequences of global wars to attain economic resources, famine and drought" (see last week's *Perspective*).

To Malaysians, this has an even greater significance because Wawasan 2020 is environmentally blind. None of the nine challenges address ecological concerns as such; this is one blind spot that must be urgently addressed in the next decade, among others.

In fact, this is one area where Malaysia could make a tremendous difference and take the lead in our own mould.

We are among the world's "mega-diversities" in practically all respects.

This must be turned into our competitive edge and speed is of the essence.

So as we greet the New Year, we must be mindful that the rules of the game have changed since the inception of Wawasan 2020; so is the way it must be played.

Unfortunately, we are still behind in terms of realising the goals of Wawasan 2020, what with the security of future generations still uncertain.

Now we must focus on crossing the finishing line by all means, in the shortest time possible.

The race is not over yet. Failure is not an option.

\* The writer is the Vice-Chancellor of Universiti Sains Malaysia. He can be contacted at [vc@usm.my](mailto:vc@usm.my)

[Terms & Conditions](#)