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二〇二〇年宏愿

THE MALAYSIAN CHINESE

Ling Liong Sik

Towards Vision 2020



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PREFACE

WE MALAYSIAN CHINESE can be proud of our heritage. The Malaysian Chinese community has always been blessed with highly motivated leaders willing to work selflessly for the good of others. In particular during turbulent times, Tun Tan Cheng Lock emerged in the darkest days of the Emergency and formed the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) to look after the interests of the community. Always remember, we are now following in the footsteps of these leaders who worked unstintingly for the good of Malaysians of Chinese descent in times much tougher than ours. Our own efforts may seem small and insignificant in comparison to the sacrifices those early leaders made for the good of our present generation, but they are no less important.

Thanks to the hard work of our predecessors, and especially their determination to co-operate with Malaysians of all ethnic groups, many of the evils the nation's leaders fought to overcome in those early days, such as widespread poverty and narrow communalism, have been largely defeated. Of course, this is no reason for complacency. There are still poor and underprivileged Malaysians living in the New Villages, and at times there seems to be no shortage of ambitious politicians willing to exploit communal sentiments for their own ends. We have the heavy responsibility of working with all Malaysians to guard the peace and harmony of our

nation even as we build on past achievements and face the challenges of the future.

Much of this book is concerned with the challenges presented by the new world economic order and the new issues we face as we enter the 21st century and a new millennium. We in the MCA have a vision for the Chinese community. We foresee a day when the Chinese community will be united politically and work in unison with the other races to build the first multi-ethnic developed nation in the world. Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad's Vision 2020 challenges us all to work together to create a strong and industrialized economy. Our entrepreneurs are also seeking out new markets for Malaysian products at a time when the opening-up of countries such as Cambodia, Vietnam and China is presenting greater competition to Malaysia's efforts to attract foreign investors. Meanwhile, the new National Development Policy, which replaced the New Economic Policy, presents every Malaysian with virtually unlimited opportunities, not only for physical and material advancement, but also for the further development of a truly Malaysian culture. Being more Malaysian will not make us less Chinese, Malay or Indian. Instead, it will enrich our lives and help strengthen the ties that bind our multiracial society together. However, mere economic success can also bring a dangerous sense of complacency and even family breakup as is occurring in many Western countries. In short, while the future is a bright one, it will require the continued dedication of us all to ensure that our goals are achieved.

Chapter 1

BUILDING ON THE PAST

I AM A FOURTH generation Malaysian of Chinese origin. My great-grandfather, Ling Kong Mee, came to Malaya before the turn of the century with little more than his slippers and the shirt on his back. He came with his wife and they settled down in Sitiawan, a coastal town in the state of Perak. My grandfather, Ling Ti Kong, was given a plot of land and he became a rubber planter. I never knew my grandfather because he died before I was born, but his hardworking and enterprising spirit is well remembered and cherished in my family. Through sheer determination, grandpa Ti Kong taught himself to read and write Jawi, the old Malay script. He also taught himself to write romanized Chinese. From an uneducated, penniless immigrant, he became a community leader and a Justice of Peace. My grandfather's story is not uncommon. The Chinese the world over, upon leaving their fatherland, worked hard to make new lives for themselves and their families.

A keynote address delivered at the World Chinese Conference in Moka, Mauritius on April 23, 1993, which brought together over three hundred Chinese leaders and intellectuals from throughout the world. The conference was organized by the Mauritius Chinese Chamber of Commerce and supported by the Mauritius government. Dr Ling Liong Sik, as President of the MCA, was one of the few leaders invited to present a keynote address at the gathering.

The Chinese are the most scattered race in the world but that did not come easily. As Betty Lee Sung wrote in her book, *Mountain of God*, emigration requires a powerful motivation. Creatures of habit and tradition, men are inclined to stay where they are and endure what they must, rather than strike out for the unknown. Indeed, there were several powerful motivations like grinding poverty, religious persecution and the lure of gold.

My great-grandfather was both poor and persecuted. He and his family were Methodists and the aftermath of the Boxer Rebellion was unpleasant for any who seemed to show a preference for western ways and beliefs. And so like thousands of other Foo-chows, he left, seeking a haven elsewhere.

Most Foochows settled in Sibü, Sarawak; here they were free to build their churches and lead a peaceful life. Those early Foochow churches still stand and continue to function as a gathering place for the community.

When the Chinese first set foot in Malaya as early as the fourteenth century, they were attracted by the vast economic potential of the country. But the flow to Malaya only started in earnest after the 1820s. The Chinese came as traders, shopkeepers, planters and miners. They worked in the tin mines and opened up plantations of pepper, rubber, gambier, coconut and sugar. But it was a bitter life. If they had left China to escape a miserable existence, life in a new country was even worse. Working as labourers in the mines and plantations, the early Chinese faced terrible working and living conditions. For example, in 1857, out of a group of eighty-seven coolies who worked to start a tin mine in Kuala Lumpur, fifty-nine died of malaria within a month of their arrival. Such tragedies did not only happen in Malaya. Emigrant Chinese have died in the gold fields of Australia and on the railroads of America, their lives lost in helping to develop their adopted countries. And the truth of the matter is that wherever the Chinese settled and prospered, so too did the country.

Our forefathers finally stopped dreaming of going back to Chung Kuok after the communist takeover of China in 1949 and

they learned to make a long-term commitment to their host society. Today, the Chinese are perhaps the most international race in the world, citizens of every nation. We have become an integral part of our adopted lands. And the world over, wherever there are Chinese, we find common traits: hearts that leap in response to the drum roll of a lion dance, fingers that automatically grasp the chopsticks, and of course, how can we ever forget the ears that immediately recognize the clack of mahjong tiles.

Many of those qualities that made our forefathers a "valuable acquisition" (in the words of Sir Francis Light, the founder and first Governor of Penang) continue to make the present generation of Chinese outside China an invaluable asset to their communities. Documented figures bear this out. As early as 1937, Chinese investment in Malaya was estimated to be about half of other foreign investments combined: US\$200 million compared to US\$454.5 million.

In 1794, Sir Francis Light had this to say about the economic contribution of the early Chinese in Penang: "The Chinese constitute the most valuable part of our inhabitants: There are men, women and children . . . and they possess the different trades of carpenters, masons and smiths, are traders, shopkeepers and planters: they employ small vessels . . . they are the only people from whom a revenue may be raised without expenses and extraordinary effort of government. They are a valuable acquisition . . ."

Come to think of it, we haven't changed all that much in two hundred years.

In 1991, Washington Sycip, chairman of the SGV Group of Manila, described the overseas Chinese as possessing the ability to smell profits and make decisions quickly; a penchant for eating well and preferring round tables for quicker exchange of information; generally avoiding politics but maintaining good relations with the government; and being good citizens in their host countries. Which just about sums up the modern overseas Chinese businessman: he wants to make money so that he can eat and live well. He steers clear of trouble and he pays his taxes.

But beneath this materialistic veneer lies a deeply ingrained belief that one must work hard to achieve success. This requires persistence, patience and tolerance, and stamina, qualities which Chinese stories and fables extol. At the same time, the Chinese concept of an ideal man is one who is reasonable or moderate. This quality of moderation is embodied within the Confucian doctrine of the Golden Mean which urges man to listen to different counsel and to take the middle or moderate stand, and never the extremes. The reasonable man exercises self-control to a proper degree and moderation in passions like pride, covetousness, envy and anger. And this cardinal virtue of moderation has been passed down through the generations of Chinese (Malaysian Chinese included) throughout the world. In fact, in the Malaysian context, moderation is a vital factor because the ability to give and take enables the three major races in the country to live and work together in harmony.

That was how we achieved independence. When the British returned to Malaya after World War II, they were willing to give independence to the Malaysians, but only if the indigenous Malays could share political and economic power with the immigrant communities.

When the communists took over China in 1949, the overseas Chinese had to re-orientate themselves to their adopted land because the door back home was closed. As such, there was a need for a vehicle which could instil that love and loyalty amongst the Chinese to Malaya. At the same time, the country had plunged into a war with the communists. Officially called the Emergency, the struggle against the communist insurgents provided the immediate impetus for the formation of the Malayan Chinese Association (it became the Malaysian Chinese Association after 1963). Faced with a militant communist challenge, the Chinese community leaders needed to consolidate their position within the society. Sir Henry Gurney, the British High Commissioner, also wanted a centralized non-communist Malayan Chinese party to provide effective leadership.

The MCA was the brainchild of Tan Cheng Lock who became its first president from 1949 to 1958. His overriding concern was that the socio-economic position of the Chinese in Malaya be protected through political action. It was this motivation that drove the Chinese to organize themselves politically to acquire citizenship. But apart from economic consideration, Tan Cheng Lock also wanted the MCA to act as a midwife to give birth to a Malayan-centred loyalty and consciousness amongst the Chinese.

The success of the MCA in achieving its objectives is unquestionable. In fact, the commitment of its early leaders established the MCA as the rallying point for the Chinese in the anti-communist crusade. Consider this, in carrying out their duties during the Emergency some three hundred MCA office-bearers and members were killed by the communist terrorists. And when the Emergency finally ended twelve years later, the MCA could feel proud that it had done its part in helping the nation defeat those who had aimed to destroy it.

But to achieve independence from the British, it was still imperative that the Chinese worked hand-in-hand with the Malay community which was and still is represented by the United Malays National Organization or UMNO as it is widely known. Malaya became independent in 1957 on the basis of an independence agreement signed by the elite of the major races in the country: UMNO, MCA and the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC). The principles of this agreement are enshrined in our Federal Constitution which protects the rights of all the races.

Over the decades since independence, Malaysians of different ethnic origins have learned to work and live well together. Today, a foreigner coming to Malaysia for the first time often has difficulty telling a Malay Malaysian from a Chinese Malaysian or an Indian Malaysian. We regard this as a compliment, for this indeed is our country's long-term goal: to be known as Malaysians and not by our race. You might think that to achieve this we will be giving up our individual culture, religion or customs. You are wrong. We do not intend to do that. What we aim for is to preserve these charac-

teristics in a harmonious way. This unity in diversity is something we are truly proud of and for this quality, Malaysia has often been singled out and commended.

Malaysians of Chinese origin are the second largest community in the country, comprising 33 per cent or six million of the eighteen million population. Like the Malays and the Indians, the Chinese were and are free to practice our way of life, observe our customs and festivals. At the same time, there have been many cross-cultural influences that have come about over the years, enriching what we call the Malaysian culture. We believe that this harmonious and peaceful co-existence is no accident of history. It is the result of many decades of hard work and an effective system of government that believes in consensus amongst the racial groups.

Of course, there have been dark and difficult moments in our history when misunderstandings marred the harmonious fabric. Such was the case of the May 13 race riots in 1969. To rectify the great economic imbalances between the Malays and the Chinese, the New Economic Policy (NEP) was formulated with its twin-pronged objectives of eradicating poverty and restructuring society.

The NEP, as the policy came to be known, saw the government adopting specific programmes to accelerate the economic progress of the Malays. Many schemes were also launched to assist the Chinese, especially those in poverty-stricken new villages and rural areas. These programmes have helped the Malays to increase their share of the economic pie from two per cent to 20 per cent during the NEP period of 1970 to 1990, while the Chinese have managed to advance from 28 per cent to 45 per cent over the same period. More importantly, the twenty-year period saw the nation's poverty rate plummet from 49 per cent in 1970 to 17 per cent in 1990. This spectacular success in poverty reduction has uplifted the quality of life for all Malaysians.

Under the current National Development Policy which has replaced the NEP, the Malaysian government hopes to rectify any weakness in a particular community while harnessing the strengths of the different races for the common good of all by the year 2000.

Specifically, the plan seeks to propel the per capita income of the people from the present RM6,000 to RM17,000 by the year 2000. The National Development Policy will set the nation on its path to attaining its ambition of attaining developed nation status by the year 2020. This Vision 2020, as formulated by Dr Mahathir Mohamad, also aims at forging a closely-knit nation of Malaysians to be known as Bangsa Malaysia.

For all this to happen, education will, of course, have to play a major role. Let me quickly sketch the history of our educational system, with special reference to the development of the Chinese primary schools.

When the Chinese arrived, they brought along their schools. The first Chinese schools in Malaysia date back as far as 1815 and they were all started and supported by the emigrant community. From simple beginnings, we now have 1,289 fully and partially government assisted Chinese primary schools which form an integral part of our national school system. These Chinese schools have an enrolment of 600,000 which accounts for more than 80 per cent of all Chinese schoolchildren.

This is something which we feel augurs well for the development of our children. International studies have shown that the critical years for developing a child's cognitive skills are between six and twelve (the primary school years) and once properly nurtured during those years, the child can survive any educational system. But for the child to develop optimally during those crucial early years, he should go to a school where the medium of instruction is his mother tongue.

In Malaysia, we also have Tamil vernacular and the Malay national primary schools. Together with the Chinese primary schools, they form a three-pillared national primary education system. But the national system also dictates that for secondary and tertiary education, students are encouraged to meet under one roof to study, work and play together and from there, blend into one Malaysian race.

When we look back, we, who are part of the Chinese Diaspora, can feel proud of our achievements. We can honour our ancestors for their courage, their foresight, their struggles and their sacrifices. But let us not be complacent because there's still so much more we can do to build on what our forefathers started. The Chinese in Malaysia, for example, have come a long way. From a small group, they have worked hard and contributed to modern Malaysia, politically, economically and socially. Today, they continue working hand-in-hand with the other communities for national growth and development. The Chinese do not work apart from other communities. They work with them.

The Chinese have never been denied a chance to voice their hopes and aspirations throughout the history of Malaysia. The multiracial nature of the ruling Barisan Nasional government offers a chance for community-based parties like UMNO for the Malays, the MCA for the Chinese and the MIC for the Indians to present the hopes, fears and aspirations of the respective communities in the process of decision-making.

Many nations have marvelled at Malaysia's success in achieving peace, prosperity and progress in the context of its multi-ethnic structure. But we do not intend to rest on our laurels. We seek to transform Malaysia, develop it further so that we can join the community of advanced nations in the not too distant future.

In Malaysia, the Chinese community is actively participating in the government's Vision 2020 plan for progress and prosperity. As loyal, dedicated citizens, they will toil and sweat, sparing no effort hand-in-hand with their fellow citizens to achieve this vision. In the process, we can yet be another inspiration to the world.

I am indeed a child of my country. That country which my great-grandfather, Ling Kong Mee, chose to come and put down roots for the Ling family. I will live and die in Malaysia. I will continue to serve Malaysia. Malaysia will command my absolute loyalty for I know of no other place I can call home.

Chapter 2

LIBERALIZATION AND DEREGULATION

THE 1990s is the era of the Far East. The momentum and potential of growth in the Far East is expected to outstrip that of other regions of the world. Malaysia, being in this vibrant and dynamic region, should therefore adopt necessary policies to join in and strengthen the tide of this tremendous excitement and activity. The stage has been set. We can either take up these opportunities or be left behind while other countries in the region progress further.

Malaysia has done well in overriding the effects of the global economic slowdown of the mid-1980s. The economy has recovered remarkably due to the well thought out policies implemented by the government. The momentum of growth has surged, culminating in the 10 per cent growth rate recorded last year. We can now either choose to brace ourselves to meet a new set of challenges or just be content to remain where we are.

The Barisan Nasional government is definitely not content with staying where it is. The government realizes the tremendous

A keynote address delivered at the launching of the INSAP Council in August 1991. INSAP is the think-tank of the MCA whose main functions are to deliberate and present the Party's stand on major issues affecting the Chinese community and the country. Members are drawn from various sectors, including the business and the academia, and include both political and non-political persons.

opportunities that this decade will bring and has formulated a policy in the National Development Policy that would guide the country to another era of achievement in the 1990s. Globally, these policies are aimed at improving the competitiveness of the Malaysian economy. Domestically, they are aimed at enhancing growth with the equitable sharing of the benefits of this growth. The government will pursue growth vigorously and aggressively to ensure that there is enough benefits for everyone to share. Only with such policies can we ensure an equitable distribution of wealth for all in the country, irrespective of race, religion, region and location.

The government has pledged that it will continue with its liberalization and deregulation policies to attract investments. It has de-emphasized earlier numerical targets for achievement by ethnic groups. No time-frame has been set to achieve any numerical targets. In line with these policies, the private sector will be the main engine of growth with the least government intervention. The government will play only a regulatory role and provide the basic infrastructure. Privatisation will be given increased importance. Already 146 projects have been earmarked for privatisation. In 1991 alone, twenty-three entities are expected to be privatised. Another fourteen are expected to be privatised in 1992. The government's decision to decrease its involvement in the economy is in sharp contrast to the New Economic Policy. The government will not only divest, but divest vigorously. This will help create a dynamic, vibrant and self-reliant private sector that will be allowed to thrive and expand with the least government intervention.

The promotion of the private sector as the main engine of growth will also ensure that everyone who wants to start a business will be encouraged and assisted to do so. To further encourage this, small- and medium-sized industries would be given all the assistance required in the form of soft loans, basic infrastructure and advisory or technical services. Special industrial sites will also be established to encourage the setting-up of these industries. RM140.6 million has been allocated under the Sixth Malaysia Plan for the development of small- and medium-sized industries. Over eleven

thousand hectares of land is expected to be developed during the Sixth Malaysia Plan for industrial estate development, especially for small- and medium-sized industries. All communities will no doubt benefit from such an aggressive promotion.

In short, we can say that the economic system for the 1990s will be based on reward according to merit. All those who are willing to work hard, all those who are willing to take risks will be accordingly rewarded.

To enhance the country's industrial competitiveness, the government will increase spending on research and development until it equals 1.8 per cent of the Gross National Product by the year 2000. The increased importance given to science and technology under the National Development Plan will also help to enhance the country's competitiveness in the manufacturing sector. All existing industrial establishments will be provided with the needed incentives to enable them to upgrade their level of technology, as well as to improve labour productivity.

On the education front, the government's aim is to expand educational opportunities for all. The government will expand all existing universities so that more university places will be made available to our youths. To realize the objective of education for all, the government is encouraging the private sector to play not only a greater, but a more dynamic, role in this area. This will be done through measures to encourage more twinning programmes between local and foreign institutions and the setting-up of branch campuses in Malaysia by foreign universities. The government is also exploring the possibility of establishing an open university so that all who aspire for tertiary education will be given the opportunity to do so.

The government's commitment to provide education for all is clearly reflected in the increased allocation for education under the Sixth Malaysia Plan. In the case of TAR College, the allocation has been increased ten-fold, from the RM2 million under the Fifth Malaysia Plan to RM20 million under the Sixth Malaysia Plan. The MCA will use this increased allocation to expand its present

campus in Setapak and to establish new branch campuses. Besides this, educational opportunities for the Chinese will also be improved with the expected increase in the intake of more non-Bumiputeras into vocational institutes and polytechnics as promised under the National Development Policy. Under the Sixth Malaysia Plan, the government has also doubled its allocation to RM40 million to support government-aided schools. This allocation is also meant for government-assisted Chinese primary schools. With this commitment, I am confident that we will be able to upgrade the facilities in the Chinese primary schools significantly.

In the government service, positive steps have already been taken to ensure that more Chinese and Indians are taken in as pledged in the National Development Policy. The government firmly believes that in a multi-ethnic society, government policies must not only be formulated and implemented justly for all, but must be seen to be so. In that light, it will ensure that the government service at all levels will be reasonably represented by all races in the country. This will no doubt help to reflect the just and fair implementation of government policies. In line with the government's intention of eradicating poverty, more land will be made available. This will give the poor, especially those in formerly new villages who are facing land constraints, the opportunity to improve their economic status. These villages could in turn be transformed into vibrant economic centres that could be integrated into the mainstream of economic development. The government has also pledged that it will open up more land schemes to enhance the participation of the Chinese and Indian poor.

Rest assured that the government is committed to seeing to it that whatever policies drawn up will be successfully implemented to benefit the people and ensure that Malaysia taps the opportunities that exist in the Far East. We aim to make Malaysians better off by the end of the decade. The target is to raise per capita income from the present RM6,000 to RM10,000 by 1995 and RM17,500 by the year 2000. Manufactured exports will constitute over 80 per cent of total exports by 2000, up from the present 60 per cent.

The government has set and will implement the various plans that will launch Malaysia on the path to Vision 2020. As the Prime Minister has said, there can only be one definition for Malaysia as a fully developed country. To borrow the words of the Prime Minister, "By the year 2020, Malaysia can be a united nation, with a confident Bangsa Malaysia, infused by strong moral and ethical values, living in a society that is democratic, liberal and tolerant, caring, economically just, progressive and prosperous, and in full possession of an economy that is competitive, dynamic, robust and resilient."

We can choose to substitute the word "can" with the word "will".

The first step towards creating a Bangsa Malaysia has already been taken. The government is already reviewing the extent to which it is necessary to identify ethnicity in certain government documents. This is an important first step. By the year 2020, the country would emerge more united. More resilient. Stronger to face any challenges. I am confident we are not far from our goal.

The MCA, as the second largest component party in the Barisan Nasional, has an important role to play in ensuring the essential prerequisites for the success of this policy. Social and political stability will be maintained through adopting an approach to ensure that all policies implemented in the 1990s are just and fair to all communities. Let me emphasize that it is this socio-political stability that has enabled all Malaysians to work as one. It is this socio-political stability that distinguishes Malaysia from other multi-ethnic countries. The government will ensure that all who work hard will reap the benefits of their endeavour. As a result of the MCA working hand in hand with other Barisan Nasional component parties, by the end of the 1990s, there will be total elimination of any feelings of loss and neglect by any particular group or community. This, the MCA pledges. This, the MCA will do.

Let us examine the record of the DAP. What have they done to contribute towards the welfare of all Malaysians? In the 1980s, the government took the necessary steps to pull the country out of

its worst post-war recession. The DAP, on the other hand, exploited the hardship of the workers and entrepreneurs during this very dark period of our economic history by alleging that the government had been undemocratic and unjust in its cut-backs and the move to call back bad loans. The DAP also demanded the resignation of national leaders to accept accountability of the recession and kept on alleging that there have been scandals and even abuse of power within the Barisan Nasional government.

In the face of these blatant allegations and negativism from the DAP, UMNO and the MCA remained steadfast in their commitment to economic reforms and promotion of economic growth. The MCA remained undaunted in its efforts to represent the Chinese community in the National Economic Consultative Council. While the going got tough, the party representatives sharpened their intellectual skills and continued to express the community's aspirations and hopes in a rational and effective manner. The DAP, on the other hand, gave up the battle and pulled out. In the process, the DAP absconded from its responsibility to represent those who had voted for it. The MCA's efforts at the NECC have been rewarded by the fact that a large part of the recommendations have been accepted by the government and contained in the National Development Policy.

Today, the country's economic success speaks for itself. The government's far-sightedness has paid off handsomely. Unemployment has been brought down from over 10 per cent in 1986 to almost full employment by 1990. Total investment approved by MIDA increased from below RM10 billion in 1986 to RM28 billion in 1990 and RM20 billion within the first half of 1991. There is more than enough momentum to ensure a growth rate in excess of 7 per cent for the 1990s. With the implementation of the National Development Policy, the 1990s will see abundant economic opportunities for all. There will be enough business ventures for potential manufacturers. There will also be enough employment opportunities for all our youths coming out from schools, colleges and universities.

The MCA is confident that as it embarks on its strategy of rapid economic reforms and development in the 1990s and ensure fairness for all in the implementation of government policies, the DAP's brand of politics will become clearer for all to see. The people will not be hoodwinked any longer. Its brand of politics is the politics of parasites. Its brand of politics has always been based on gross misinterpretation of government intentions to arouse the emotions of the masses, in particular the Chinese community. It always aims to destroy instead of construct. Having sat on a number of Chinese-majority seats for so long, what can it actually say of its contributions to the country and to the Chinese community? Results will speak for themselves. As the country progresses towards economic and political modernization and liberalization, the DAP's brand of politics will be seen through by Malaysians and be relegated to the periphery of the socio-political mainstream.

The Chinese community must have the far-sightedness to rally around the government to assist, and in the process benefit from the economic and socio-political opportunities that will be available to everyone in the 1990s. Only through political unity under the government can we fully utilize the opportunities. The path has been set towards Vision 2020. It is up to us to take that path with confidence and full commitment. Make your decision wisely. The country's economic and socio-political future cannot and must not be gambled away by allowing ourselves to be fooled by empty promises. The Barisan Nasional government has brought us progress thus far. Our track record has proven that. Assist the government in fulfilling its policies and objectives for the 1990s. To the Malaysian Chinese community, I once again repeat my call: united, we can achieve much; united, we can transform opportunities into results and benefits for the country.

Chapter 3

A VISION FOR THE 1990s

WE ARE NOW at an important crossroads in our history. Twenty years ago the nation embarked on the New Economic Policy which has played a dominant role in determining the economic and social development of the country. Today, we are almost at the end of the NEP era.

The next year 1990 will mark the beginning of a new era. What direction should the country take in its economic and social development for the post-1990 period? What policies should the government pursue now that the NEP is coming to an end? Can we rise to the challenge of the twenty-first century? Can we as a nation make it in a global economy which is becoming increasingly com-

A keynote address delivered at the launching of the Malaysian Unity Plan in October 1989. The Malaysian Unity Plan (MUP) was prepared in 1988 as part of the efforts of the MCA in articulating a national consensus for the post-1990 economic policy. Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamed, at the urging of the MCA, agreed to the formation of the National Economic Consultative Council (NECC) in October 1989. The council consists of 150 Malaysian leaders from all walks of life, including the opposition, made up of 50 per cent Bumiputera and 50 per cent non-Bumiputera representation. The council met over the period October 1989 to February 1991 and resulted in a Final Report which formed the consensus of the National Development Policy. The MUP represented the MCA's input to the NECC which accepted a number of the MUP's recommendations.

petitive and where global demand, science and technology, industry, manufacturing and even agriculture are changing so rapidly that only the most adaptive and the most enterprising nations can survive well?

For the MCA, these are not new questions. As a proactive party we have long realized the importance of the post-1990 period. In fact, the party's preparations to provide the community and nation with new goals and new strategies began more than two years ago. During the past two years, the party has carried out a major review of the NEP and identified its achievements and shortfalls. It has undertaken a comprehensive analysis of poverty, especially with regard to the new villages. It has also studied the social and cultural aspects of life such as educational development which have been affected by the NEP. These reviews, studies and discussions have involved not only party leaders and members but also community leaders, professionals, academics and other concerned people from the private and public sectors. We have not only taken into account the views of the Chinese community but also those of other Malaysians. The MCA firmly believes in the need to consider the hopes, fears and aspirations of all the communities with regard to any major policy for the country.

What we have tried to do, therefore, is to canvas as broad a spectrum of opinion as possible before our vision of the post-1990 period takes shape and becomes more concrete. Today, I am happy to say that the work of defining the economic and social agenda for the party is complete. I hope that those who have waited patiently for the party to finish this major task of defining its vision of national development in the post-1990 period will not be disappointed with the result.

What is the basic philosophy that runs through the pages of the Malaysian Unity Plan? This is a question that all Malaysians will immediately ask, not only for the MUP but for whatever plan which will eventually be adopted. For us, the choice of a philosophy for any post-1990 plan is really quite simple. A post-1990 philosophy must be based on our Constitution and the Rukunegara and

the principles of equality and justice that run through them. This philosophy must be founded on the fact that Malaysia, our nation, can only prosper if the people are united and whatever government in power adopts fair, consistent and progressive principles that respect the economic, social, cultural and political freedom of individuals and communities.

To us in the MCA the future course for our people is clear: the new policy must work in the common interest of building the national economy based on the principles of equality and justice in advancing the interests of all the citizens. It must be a consistent and progressive policy that does not try to hold back the enterprise and contribution of any group. Rather, any citizen or group that can contribute to the nation's economy must be encouraged to do so. Only with a philosophy that makes no distinction between the enterprise and contribution of the people but rather seeks the best from everyone can help this country progress.

The second philosophical principle that runs through the MUP stresses the need to build up a meritocratic system that promotes creativity, excellence and hard work. This is the only way to win in the sporting world. This is also the only way to win in the business world. The hard facts of life in the business world today are clear to everyone. In the United States, Britain, Japan, Taiwan and South Korea, the emphasis is on skills, productivity and excellence and these can only be produced by a merit-oriented system. If our businesses are to compete, they will have to abide by international standards of excellence. This means that our businessmen, professionals, technicians and other human resources, both Bumiputeras and non-Bumiputeras, must be chosen on the basis of excellence and ability to deliver. Anything less, and our competitiveness will falter. For this to happen, our public and private policies must be tuned to a merit system.

What do these principles of the MUP mean for the national economic policy in the post-1990 period? How do these get translated into strategies and recommendations? Before I spell them out, let us first evaluate the NEP.

The MUP believes that the NEP resulted in substantial economic and social benefits for the nation, especially for the Bumiputeras. The incidence of poverty amongst all households in Malaysia was sharply reduced by 33 per cent in twenty years. The result is an expected incidence of poverty of 16.7 per cent in 1990, a better achievement than the OPP target of 18.0 per cent.

For the post-1990 period the structural and policy adjustments should be taken to their logical end. There should be equality of opportunity with merit and excellence rewarded. Guaranteed outcome systems such as quotas should be phased out. In its place, there should be competition to ensure efficiency and cost-effectiveness. Only in this way can the distortions and inefficiencies of the Malaysian economy be removed. The MUP has pointed out that in fact there is already a strong Bumiputera business community and that targets for Bumiputera participation in corporate wealth and employment have already been largely attained. Change is required. A change towards a more competitive, less government-managed, less ethnically divisive economic environment.

In addition to providing the current environment in which there would be equality of opportunity and a system that makes full use of and rewards economic enterprise on the basis of merit and efficiency, we propose in the MUP to harness all the different sectors of the economy towards innovative growth and enhanced productivity. The MUP's strategies for these sectors are as follows: deregulation of the economy; rationalization of the public sector; privatisation in the national interest; development of human resources; deepening the industrialization process; emphasis on science and technology; implementation of fair representation in finance and banking; expansion of the services sector; encouragement of small- and medium-sized enterprises; revitalization of the rural sector; generating urban development; boosting new village development; and protecting the national natural resource base.

In each of these sectors, the MUP identifies alternative strategies and programmes that can generate resilient and dynamic

growth and remove the obstacles that retard full development of many. These growth strategies and programmes suggested for the 1990s are not new or original. We are not ashamed to say that the MUP was drawn from some of the best economic thinkers in the country. What is different is that the MUP has put these separate ideas from many different economic fields and thinkers into a comprehensive but integrated programme which can enable our economy to grow stronger and compete regionally and internationally.

In the final analysis, the MUP recognizes that it is not the wording of a policy which counts but the implementation of it and the concrete checks and balances that go to ensure that no deviations take place which are contrary to the intent and spirit of the policy. Whilst the intentions of the policy framers might be fair and just, good intentions alone are not sufficient to prevent a national policy from being wrongly implemented or misinterpreted.

While the MUP itself offers a clear blueprint on how the Malaysian nation should approach the next decade, it is vital that a comprehensive system of checks and balances be set up to prevent abuses and ensure compliance with the post-1990 policy in all important spheres of economic and social life. Towards this end, the MUP has proposed checks and balances that can effectively ensure this. One of the most important elements is an independent representative commission whose task would be to monitor the implementation of the policy to ensure that all objectives and targets are justly and effectively implemented. It would also act as a final appeal board for major grievances related to the implementation of the policy. Furthermore, the implementation of the economic policy of the country in the post-1990 period would also be assisted by the establishment of a joint council containing representatives from the private and public sectors to monitor the proposed deregulation of the business environment. All these measures would help provide prompt and critical feedback to the government to check inefficiencies, abuses, mismanagement and deviations.

In view of the fact that the proper management of race relations would have a positive effect on economic and social develop-

ment, the MUP suggests that the government legislate a Race Relations Act which emphasizes commitment to the achievement of a genuinely integrated society where there are equal opportunities accompanied by cultural diversity in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance.

The main economic goal should be to create a dynamic, resilient and competitive economic structure through policies that are based on the principles of equality of opportunities and merit. In the years beyond 1990, efforts to strengthen the economic foundations of our country through policies that reward risk, hard work and enterprise, irrespective of race, must be redoubled. Such policies would stimulate and generate more employment and wealth, and ensure the economic growth that is necessary before further poverty alleviation can take place. A united government and people will be the biggest contributor to economic growth and resilience just as a divided government and people would be the greatest factor retarding growth and resilience. The MCA endorses a post-1990 economic policy that is nationalistic, treats all citizens equally, and is national in the true sense of the word. Through this policy, all citizens irrespective of ethnicity would be motivated to work hard and excel, knowing that the basis for success is hard work, enterprise and creativity.

Chapter 4

BUILDING A TRULY NATIONAL ECONOMY THROUGH CO-OPERATION

WHEN OUR FOREFATHERS first step onto these shores, I am sure they never imagined that together with their Malay and Indian brothers, they would be able to transform the peninsula into the harmonious, peaceful and prosperous Malaysian society that we see today. But they did.

In the 1940s, they fought alongside the other communities against the tyranny of the Japanese Occupation (1941-1945). In the 1950s, the community mobilized its resources to fight against the communist insurgency and worked hand in hand with the Malays and Indians to strive for independence from British rule. Over the period of the 1970s and the 1980s, the community as a whole resolved to work even harder with the other communities in order to make the modern corporate sector much more multi-ethnic.

During that period, many in the Chinese community had to make temporary personal sacrifices and adjustments in order to facilitate the more significant presence of other communities in in-

A keynote address delivered at the Second Malaysian Chinese Economic Congress in August 1992.

stitutions of higher learning and in the corporate sector. Hindsight tells us those sacrifices were a valuable contribution towards the achievement of national unity and socio-political stability. The community in turn reaped benefits in terms of more rapid economic growth and rapid improvement in its economic lot.

The 1990s and beyond mark another threshold of Malaysian national development. Not only do we see the end of a successful period of adjustment under the New Economic Policy (NEP), but the decade sees the beginning of ten years under the National Development Policy (NDP) which will seek to de-emphasize numerical ethnic targets and encourage the full development of all entrepreneurial talents within our midst. On the broader perspective and longer term, the nation is guided by the objectives laid out in Vision 2020, which seeks to propel Malaysia into the ranks of the developed nations within a period of thirty years.

Building on the success of the NEP in which we so successfully created a vibrant and multi-ethnic corporate sector, the post-1990 period is a time for all Malaysians to participate ever more actively and put the country on the road to greater economic progress. The essential thrust of this era will be to enhance the momentum of growth, and at the same time ensure that all the weak and vulnerable groups in our society are provided with the needed protection and assistance. This means first of all making Malaysia the first choice of local and foreign investors. Economically, Malaysia is poised to enjoy a far better future. We have the resources. We have the expertise. We have been successful in overcoming the effects of a serious post-war recession in 1985. Today, Malaysia has not only fully recovered; but in 1990 achieved a growth rate of 10 per cent. This makes us the most rapidly growing economy in the world.

When we are dealing with a subject as important as the national economy, we are talking about something that affects all of us. We therefore need to work together. Not as different entities, but as one entity working harmoniously together for the common good of the country as a whole, and every man on the street.

Co-operation and integration will have to take priority in the fulfilment of the objectives that we have set for ourselves. Whether we manage to work together or not will determine, to a large extent, the success or failure of these objectives. There is no room therefore for any reluctance on our part to share our strengths with those who are weaker. On this same note, the Chinese should also expect their friends from other communities to share their strengths. This symbiotic relationship between the Chinese and the other races will create in all Malaysians a better and far stronger generation of Bangsa Malaysia in the future.

When considering the role of the Chinese in the context of multi-ethnic co-operation, we are led to two basic questions. First, what can and should the Chinese do? Second, how the Chinese expect the other communities to reciprocate? The key factor in continued economic progress, as I have pointed out, must be co-operation. Are we willing to work for ourselves and others a better place to live and to do business in? In this respect, the Chinese community must work even harder to foster greater understanding amongst the various communities. Sharing must be a natural part of us. We must pool our resources and resolve to work together.

We Chinese, as a community, should therefore ask of ourselves then, what role can we play in the fulfilment of the objectives of the next decade as individuals and as a community as a whole. To answer the question honestly would require each one of us to access our strengths and weaknesses. Our strengths would have to be further developed. Our weaknesses would have to be overcome.

After 34 years of nation building, we are today witnessing the participation of all races as equity owners, managers and workers in the manufacturing sector, especially in large enterprises. We already have a situation where Bumiputera and Indian workers, clerks and managers are common sights in Chinese shops, backyard factories and service outlets. Nevertheless, I want to see greater sharing of our business expertise in the small industries and businesses. Let us continue to enhance this sharing of our organizational experience by accelerating the pace of training provided

to our friends from the other communities. If possible, let us train them so that they can eventually be entrepreneurs themselves. This will not jeopardize our community's economic growth. On the contrary, it will enhance it. When the nation is peaceful and stable, the economy will grow even more rapidly.

Notwithstanding our success, the Chinese community must also admit that it has its own organizational shortcomings. Thus far, we must admit our inability to transform our many small- and medium-sized enterprises into corporate entities. This not only means that many of these entities would not be able to pass the "three generations" test, but also that we would continue to be constrained in the manner we can share our expertise with the other races. How can we share, when each of these enterprises remain "one-man shows", employing between five and ten family members as workers?

I strongly urge all the presently successful small- and medium-sized enterprises to explore ways in which they can upgrade their technology and modernize their corporate structures so that their products and services can be of a consistently high quality that is necessary to find market niches worldwide. That is the way the Japanese, Taiwanese and Hong Kong's small- and medium-sized businesses have expanded. That is the way we should grow. In the process, we can contribute more effectively towards propelling Malaysia towards 2020.

Furthermore, as these small- and medium-sized businesses expand their operations and corporatise their economic structures, there will be much more scope for the sharing of our expertise with the other communities. When these entities have to employ professional managers, they can be from any race. When these entities have to issue shares, a portion of these can of course be issued to the other communities.

The government, on its part, will also assist the modernization, expansion and upgrading of these enterprises by adopting a more liberal approach. After all, the whole nation stands to gain when these enterprises can export their goods and services over-

seas, taking over the role of multinational enterprises in generating the bulk of our country's export earnings. The government would provide the needed incentives in the form of tax-free periods or low interest rates on loans to enable these enterprises to expand and modernize. I am sure once this effort gets off the ground, it will become so much part of us Malaysians in the future.

Besides sharing our expertise at the individual and company level, the community must also make an effort to share the knowledge and workings of our network structure with the other communities. The Chinese community's guilds and associations play a very important role in mobilizing resources for economic development. It is now time for this structure to be modernized as well. I want to see the day when all our guilds and associations will not be mere meeting places where members drop in for the occasional chat or mahjong session. I want to see these organizations transformed into centres for technology and information diffusion. I want to see these officers transformed into motivators of the technology-upgrading mission I talked about.

Beginning at the federal level, the guilds of every trade must be equipped with all the knowledge and information on the latest developments in their trade. This information could be accessible through computers in all the states or district guild outlets. Regular training and information dissemination sessions should be organized at all levels. We must invite members of the other races so that they can not only share our knowledge, but also understand our *modus operandi*. Therefore, I suggest that a special task force be set up to explore the best ways of modernizing the structure of our guilds and associations and recommend ways in which they could share their expertise with the other communities. This will remove all the unwarranted fears and prejudices of other communities regarding our network structure as a "close shop" operation. It will allow them to understand, that we are willing to share our expertise information, but in the running of an enterprise, individual ability, competition and efficiency are key words. And in this, our competitors can also be our own relatives and blood-brothers.

Just as I am urging the Chinese community to share with others to create an integrated national economy, it is my belief that integration should be achieved in all facets of our national life. In this spirit, I would urge our Malay and Indian brothers to share with us areas where they are strong and dominant. In this respect, the government should facilitate more participation of the Chinese and Indians in the public sector, in particular the civil service. In a multi-ethnic Malaysia, it is vital that all communities are involved at all levels of government decision-making. The government has promised in the NDP that it will increase the intake of non-Malays into the public sector. I hope to see this realized by the end of the 1990s so that we can remove the dichotomy of the public sector being associated with the Malays and the private sector with the non-Malays.

As the nation forges ahead towards more rapid industrialization, we need to upgrade the level of human resource training. Education, in particular tertiary education, is the dream of every youth. The MCA has done its part by expanding TAR College. Its doors are open to all, and I have already requested the Ministry of Education to send to the College more Bumiputera students. I have also urged other institutions which are essentially mono-ethnic in enrolment to consider opening their doors to us. Together, let us be trained. Together, let us acquire the needed expertise. We can then emerge as future business, industrial, societal and political leaders with that built-in common experience, and that built-in sensitivity to accommodate each other's dreams and aspirations.

The cost of education is rising rapidly. And it is increasingly becoming beyond the reach of the poor. Speaking on behalf of the poor of the non-Malay communities, I urge the government to expand further its scholarship and education assistance programmes so that the poor of these races will not be denied tertiary education for economic reasons. Let us provide the needed financial assistance to talented youths from all poor backgrounds. Specifically, I would urge the government to set up a Malaysian Education Fund which could provide loans and assistance to the qualified poor of all

ances. Thus, they will have the opportunity to unleash their full potential in pursuit of our development goals.

The nation requires each community to play its part in pursuit of Vision 2020. After decades of significant contribution in the building of this country, it is time for the Chinese community to brace itself to face new challenges ahead. We Chinese should galvanize our entrepreneurial flair, our economic know-how and socio-political structure. We should modernize our family business structure, upgrade our enterprises based on modern technology and look to the world as our markets. Let us follow the experience of the Newly Industrializing Economies of Asia. Let us not be limited by the domestic market alone. We must work together with our fellow Malaysians so that everyone can share in the rapid economic growth that we are generating for the country. But, let us take the lead in exporting so that we can take over from the multinational enterprises as the major generator of export earnings. Thirty years from now, we will find that as a result of the rapid growth we are promoting, there is more than enough room to accommodate everybody's aspirations, expectations and dreams.

The 1990s poses many challenges to Malaysians. Ideas, I have no doubt, we have plenty. However, ideas and visions will remain nothing but mere rhetoric until and unless we are all willing to work together. With consensus, co-operation, commitment and a clearly defined common vision, we are able to face the challenges ahead. Let us focus on the future by learning from the past. Let our past and present challenges and experiences help shape the future of multi-ethnic co-operation in the 1990s and beyond. It is my fervent hope that this Congress had spurred you in one way or another to a greater commitment on your part in the realization of the goals of Vision 2020. You have had ample opportunities to trash out your views, objections and apprehensions to the various topics highlighted in this Congress. I hope the frank discussions will serve as useful inputs for us to draw up solid plans for the future.

Chapter 5

THE CHALLENGE AHEAD

THE COUNTRY is entering a new era, a future full of challenges. We can either take these challenges in our stride, turn them into opportunities for Malaysia, or we can chose to bask in our past laurels and let destiny take its toll. The choice has already been made. And a wise one too. Malaysia's Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir Mohamad, in February this year, unveiled a vision of a united, strong, dynamic and progressive Malaysia, a nation truly developed in all senses of the word. The future will come upon us. That is inevitable. But do we let it pass by? Or do we face up to the challenges? Much more than that, the Prime Minister's visionary address "Malaysia: the Way Forward" has imposed upon Malaysians challenges and laid out for the country the ideals to be attained within the next thirty years. If we fulfil our task thirty years from now, Malaysians will stand proud and tall amongst the citizens of the world. For we would have become what we chose to be.

A keynote address delivered at the MCA General Assembly in July 1991. The MCA's Annual General Assembly meetings bring together party grassroots leaders from throughout the country. The gatherings allow delegates to exchange views on issues pertaining to the development of the Party and the country. The Party President's speech for each year outlines the Party's future direction and maps out specific strategies and programmes for the year.

Our Prime Minister has taken that first step for all Malaysians. Let us now continue the journey. Let all Malaysians put their shoulders to the wheel and toil towards the realization of the Malaysian vision. Let no one doubt that a resourceful nation with a youthful, zestful and committed citizenry can attain what it sets out to do. Let no politics of creed and prejudice stand in the way of our common goal.

To the Chinese community, let us ask ourselves: what can we do for the country? To meet its self-imposed challenge, the nation requires each and every citizen to play its part. Given the scenario, such as can be envisaged from the ten-year Second Outline Perspective Plan (OPP2), we are all aware of the greater emphasis given to nation building to promote economic growth, and the greater role expected of the private sector. The government will continue to liberalize and regulate the economy. Its involvement henceforth shall gradually diminish as it confines itself to matters relating to economic equity and social justice. It is an environment, you might surmise, which recognizes and rewards excellence and industry. In other words, an overall meritocracy in which the criteria for success are ability and quality, nothing less and nothing else.

You might well ask what the role of the Chinese is? For the answers, we need to take a careful look at ourselves. Let us galvanize our entrepreneurial talent, economic know-how and socio-political infrastructure and work together for the common good of all Malaysians. Thirty years from now, every community will find that as a result of the rapid growth we are promoting, there is more than enough room to accommodate everybody's aspirations and expectations.

The sacred task before us is to defend and further enhance the socio-political stability that we enjoy today. It is this socio-political stability that enables all Malaysians to work as one. It is this socio-political stability that so markedly distinguishes Malaysia from many other multiracial countries. Already, the country has earned a place in the highest economic ranks of the world. Among the 169 countries in the world, after the Group of Seven major industrial-

ized countries and the four little dragons, stands Malaysia. Let us build now for our future generations an advanced Malaysian nation harnessing the strengths of our diversity in culture, language and religion.

The government has given an assurance that a developed nation like the one we aspire to become will have sufficient opportunities for those who are willing to work hard. A prerequisite to achieving that state of progress and prosperity is national unity. This may sound like a paradox. But it is not. Here, I would like to exhort the Chinese community to have the moral courage to share their business expertise with the other communities. A concerted national effort is needed to launch the country into rapid and sustainable growth. The momentum from the increased business will then provide the employment and further opportunities for all Malaysians. In short, with a larger economic cake, causes of deprivation will be eliminated.

Towards this end, the MCA will continuously work hard towards inculcating the values of sharing, of tolerance and compassion towards one another. These ingredients are necessary for the creation of a climate of harmony and peaceful co-existence. This climate will be the best legacy we can bequeath on our future generations.

Just as MCA will exhort and lead the Chinese community in sharing more extensively their business expertise with the other races to form more genuine joint ventures with the Bumiputeras, MCA will also expect the other communities to share with us in areas where the Chinese are lagging behind. In this respect, the Barisan Nasional government has pledged in its Second Outline Perspective Plan and the Sixth Malaysia Plan that much greater emphasis will be given to encourage more Chinese and Indians to participate at all levels of the government service and modern agriculture, in particular the new land schemes. The government realizes that in a multiracial society, government policies must not only be fair, but must also be seen to be fairly implemented. Hence, for the successful implementation of the OPP2 it is essential that there

should be greater participation by government officers of all ethnic origin in the decision-making and implementation process.

The economic challenges that we face in this coming decade are of a different dimension. We live in a world which is increasingly interdependent and made smaller by the tremendous advances in technology. The Chinese community needs to re-evaluate its position in today's modern business climate if it wishes to advance in the area of trade and commerce. There is a need for businessmen to set their sights higher, and to seek to globalize their businesses, and explore new markets. The imminent failure of the GATT talks threatens us. Malaysia regards the breakdown of the global system a watershed; already efforts are being channelled into the East Asia Economic Grouping, which aims at facilitating greater understanding amongst the Far East nations and harnessing the dynamism of the region to generate more growth prospects for the rest of the world. Therefore, set your sights on the Far East: great opportunities await. If there is anything that economic prophets the world over hold in common for once, it is the view that the Far East region will be the centre of great economic development.

What was once considered unthinkable is now possible with the communication revolution that we see before us. Essential now in every successful business is the new economic resource known as information. This means that if all other factors of production remain the same, the business with the speediest access to information will win the race. Are we capable of harnessing the new information technology to help us compete more effectively? It is imperative that we learn how. When the history of civilization is documented at some distant future, undoubtedly three greatest discoveries of man will be the fire, the wheel and the microchip.

In other words, are we ready as a community to face the challenges of the twenty-first century? There is an urgent need for careful rethinking. The MCA and the Chinese community must begin a critical evaluation of themselves to determine how they can best equip themselves to meet the challenges. The Party undertakes this

long-term task of sharpening the economic skills of the Chinese in order that they may continue to contribute significantly towards the nation's growth and development. It is also timely for MCA to re-appraise its role, objectives, policies and ideology. Whilst looking forward towards the twenty-first century, let us ask ourselves how we can be more effective, and more importantly, how we can be always attuned to the changing aspirations, expectations and needs of the people we represent and serve.

(The Chinese are today a progressive community in a prosperous and peaceful country. This has been made possible through the efforts of MCA working hand in hand within the Barisan Nasional government. In the pre-independence days of the 1940s, MCA had struggled and fought for Chinese legitimate rights and interests, especially those displaced to the new villages. In the 1950s, it successfully secured citizenship for the Chinese and established the community as an integral part of the multi-ethnic Malaysia of today. In the 1960s it laid the foundation which is largely responsible for the prosperity the Chinese enjoy now. The 1970s saw the beginning of a process of modernization and corporatization of the Malaysian Chinese business. Under the government's liberalization policy of the 1980s, the Malaysian Chinese again reaped rich harvests from the nation's growth both in domestic and international markets. Through the years, the Party has been there to protect and safeguard the interests of the Chinese community. We are gratified with the results of our labour. On the other hand, we cannot deny the trials and tribulations we have undergone. In them are reflections of what our weaknesses are. For just as the Chinese community has its strengths, it too has its weaknesses. True, more important things await to be done. But unless we overcome our weaknesses, the Party's best and noble efforts will forever be thwarted.)

Therefore, our attempts to redefine the Party's objectives and strategies in the 1990s need to include the very crucial issues of disunity amongst the Chinese, its main weakness. It was the Chinese who first extolled the virtues of being united. Unity is strength, as

the adage goes. But it appears that the story about the dying farmer and his bunch of sticks has remained only a romantic tale. No race in this country is as fragmented as the Chinese. United, we can accomplish so much more. I urge the Chinese community to give the MCA its undivided support so that the MCA can effectively represent them in our negotiations with the Barisan Nasional. There is a resignation amongst the Chinese that no matter what we do, we will not achieve unity. To many Chinese, political unity is just a dream. They immerse themselves totally in the field of business where the returns are more lucrative and immediate.

The Chinese cannot expect immediate rewards in their pursuits. Any political struggle is a long-term struggle. In striving towards our objectives and goals, we will always encounter temporary set-backs. The peninsular Chinese community must take a lesson from our brothers in Sarawak. They have remained united under the Sarawak state government. I urge all leaders of the MCA to work towards the consolidation of the Chinese in the country. The Party needs the total support and commitment of the community it represents, not for its membership to become more sizeable, but because it will give the Chinese cohesiveness of purpose and make the efforts of the MCA more effective.

History has taught us that economic progress amounts to nothing without the clout of politics to preserve it. In this increasingly transient age, nothing is ever permanent. Since independence in 1957, the Alliance and subsequently the Barisan Nasional has been in government. The Chinese community needs and expects the Barisan Nasional to safeguard its interests and see to its well-being. And as long as the Barisan Nasional is in power, that assurance is there.

The challenges get more formidable. It is no secret that the Barisan Nasional needs the support of the Chinese. The MCA has given that irrevocable commitment. I ask of the Chinese to give MCA theirs. The reality of our multi-ethnic environment means that your fortunes are as permanent as the Barisan Nasional hold on to the mandate. It is clear that greater political awareness is

wanting amongst the Chinese in Malaysia. I therefore urge all Party leaders to adopt a strategy to draw out the Chinese from their indifference, and put them on the correct political orientation. The youths should be our target for it is they who shall mould and inherit the nation.

We in MCA have a vision for the Chinese community. We foresee a day soon when feelings of deprivation and discrimination will cease. There will be just and equal opportunity for anyone who is willing to work hard. All communities will be able to participate and reap fair harvest from the country's development and progress. No group will have any cause to feel deprived or left behind. This vision is the very beacon that shall guide MCA into the twenty-first century. I give you the pledge that MCA will strive to further enhance the economic, educational, cultural and socio-political status of the community.

We congratulate the government on its wisdom in the formulation of OPP2. We take pride in the knowledge that MCA has been partly instrumental in its formulation. All throughout the negotiations of the National Economic Consultative Council, MCA has remained undaunted in its stand. When the going got tough, the Party's representatives remained steadfast and undaunted, unlike DAP which gave up and pulled out and in the process absconded from its responsibility of representing the aspirations and hopes of the people who voted for it.

Politically, MCA has made some headway. The National Development Plan (NDP) aims to create a single Malaysian race to be known as Bangsa Malaysia. The first step in this direction was taken when the government announced its intention to review the need for ethnic identification in some application forms. This may seem like one small step, but it is very significant. It is envisaged that ultimately, the nation will be made up of one single race: Bangsa Malaysia.

On the economic front, I wish to advise the Chinese community not to be intimidated by quotas and percentages. With the emergence of a much more multi-ethnic corporate sector in 1990

compared to 1970, under the NDP the government has said that there will be no time frame for the 30 per cent target for the Bumiputeras. This move is a step in the right direction. With the lifting of the time frame, the Chinese community should get to work at building up their businesses in order that their extra gains might benefit others. The government on its part will promote more vigorously the development of entrepreneurship, particularly small- and medium-sized businesses and industries. It need not be a case of one group losing and another gaining.

Quality, not quantity, is now the country's chief concern. To be competitive, to be able to reach the ranks of the developed nations, the overriding factor should be quality. This is where all Malaysians must play their role. Quality is the domain of humans. In this context, it can be said that the future of our country lies in its human resources. And you and your future generations are our hope.

For this reason, there is no real fear of the lack of educational opportunities for the Chinese. Tertiary-level education will be readily available for all who seek it. We in MCA will continue our efforts in developing our human resources. We have behind us a score of successes. The Tunku Abdul Rahman College that originated from the need to supplement the limited opportunities the country once experienced has been responsible for bringing forth a great number of successful professionals.

Today, TAR College provides educational opportunities to thousands of young Malaysians. You have my pledge that MCA will continue to give utmost priority to the further development and expansion of TAR College, including the setting-up of branch campuses in Johor Bahru and Penang. Under the Sixth Malaysia Plan, TAR College has been allocated RM20 million. This is a ten-fold increase from its Fifth Malaysia Plan allocation. With this allocation, the College will have sufficient resources to realize all its plans to provide quality tertiary education to a larger number of students. Another of our achievements in the field of education lies in the successful launch of the Jayadiri Institute of Technology. This Institute will be expanded in the next few years to provide a

wider range of vocational and technical courses, including twinning programmes with foreign universities leading to the awarding of degrees to its students.

Education is an important concern of most Malaysian parents. The MCA recognizes that and undertakes to do its utmost to ensure greater opportunities for education. We laud the government's decision to accord more places to the Chinese in the country's residential and vocational schools. Existing local universities are also gradually being expanded. This is a move that augurs well for the future. In the pipeline is our own open university. Not in the too distant future, education opportunities will cease to be a contention. The MCA undertakes to fulfil this dream.

In its desire to uphold and maintain Chinese education in the country, MCA and the Chinese community are as one. The government has already given guarantee that government-aided Chinese schools will be allowed to expand and flourish while maintaining their present character. Under the Sixth Malaysia Plan the government has already doubled its allocation to RM40 million to support the partially aided schools, including the government-assisted Chinese primary schools. The Sixth Malaysia Plan will also give greater emphasis on improving the quality of mother-tongue education in our primary and secondary schools. We will also protect the integrity of independent Chinese middle schools and guarantee their rightful place in the education system. In this respect, the government will provide these schools with all needed assistance to enable them to follow the new curriculum implemented in secondary schools.

Besides the educational needs of the Chinese community, MCA will also ensure that the community enjoys complete religious and cultural freedom. They are free to practise and propagate its own religions and cultural beliefs and practices. This is enshrined in the Federal Constitution and re-emphasized in the Prime Minister's Vision 2020 in which we seek to be a truly secured Malaysian race, but with Malaysians of all origins free to practise their customs, culture and beliefs

Lest we get carried away with all these strategies for business, dynamism and education, culture and religion, let us not forget one thing: a sizeable portion of the Chinese is poor. It is regrettable that the Chinese have been stereotyped as the "economically" dominant group. Though not numerous, nor as dramatic as the term "abject poverty" suggests, this group of Chinese would welcome a few more dollars sooner than they would the promises of prosperity. While a child's education is viewed as an investment for a better future, to them it is viewed as the sacrifice of a good pair of hands. It is to the upliftment of this group of poor Chinese that MCA must also direct its efforts.

The government has pledged that it will give much greater emphasis on the eradication of poverty both in the urban and rural areas, irrespective of race. In particular, the government will provide all poor areas, including the new villages, with the needed land and other infrastructure to enable these areas to emerge as vibrant economic centres fully integrated with the rest of the economy. The MCA pledges that the 1990s will witness a significant upliftment in the socio-economic status of our less fortunate brothers and sisters in the new villages and urban poverty areas. With the government's commitment to promote small- and medium-sized industries, this will result in the transformation of these areas into thriving centres producing much needed goods and services for the nation.

Together, we can achieve much. Together, we can transform these challenges into benefits and results for the community and the nation. Divided, the vision and goals will remain mere rhetoric. Therefore, I appeal to all MCA members to sink their differences and work together for the betterment of the Party, the community and the nation.

Chapter 6

SERVING THE COMMUNITY AND THE NATION

WE IN MALAYSIA are beginning to see a greater cohesion that binds the people together. I am happy to note an increasing willingness amongst Malaysians to work together for the good of everyone in the country. This trend was very much evident in the Bumiputera Economic Convention held in January this year. Both the Bumiputeras and the non-Bumiputeras are demonstrating a much greater desire for closer co-operation. It is my wish as MCA President that this trend will be further built upon and translated into concrete action. United, we can garner our strength to face the challenges of the coming decade and beyond.

This same single-mindedness should be demonstrated by all MCA members. The MCA has been stressing unity within and outside the Party. To further underscore this point, the Party chose "Consolidation" as its theme for the past two consecutive anniversary celebrations. That was a wise choice indeed. Today, we have succeeded in bringing home the importance of unity amongst Party members and amongst Malaysians as a whole. We in the MCA pledge to continue to work towards further consolidation,

A keynote address delivered at the MCA Annual General Meeting in August 1992.

further cohesiveness amongst Party members, unity within the community and a greater feeling of "oneness" amongst Malaysians.

In line with such objectives, the MCA will continue to fight any form of extremism that threatens this bond. We should aim for the creation of a "caring and sharing" society, without divisions that will split us into segregated groups. To allow any attempt to cause disunity amongst us would not only negate our efforts to foster harmony amongst the different races, but would also run against the objectives of building a Bangsa Malaysia. Let no politics of creed and prejudice stand in the way of our common goal.

We are a country of diverse cultures and religions. This has been a unique feature of Malaysia. This diversity has been preserved and built into a major source of strength through the passage of time, thanks largely to the spirit of tolerance and respect propagated by the Alliance and the Barisan Nasional governments. It is the MCA's hope that this spirit will be enhanced. It is also the MCA's pledge that it will continue to strengthen this spirit of *esprit de corps*. The MCA will continuously work towards inculcating the values of sharing, tolerance and compassion towards one another. This is necessary for the creation of peace and harmony. This climate will be the best legacy we can bequeath to future generations.

Peace and harmony did not and will not come with a wave of the magic wand. The peace and harmony that we have been enjoying has come from over three decades of hard work, sacrifices, tolerance and the willingness to understand and adjust to the basic demands of each ethnic group. This spirit of consensus and sharing has been initiated by our forefathers in the fight for independence and built upon by subsequent leaders. The sacred task before us now is to defend this spirit and teach it to our young who will take over the reins of power one day.

The political and social stability since independence has been translated into rapid economic progress and a better standard of living for all Malaysians. Malaysia stands out as a shining example of a well managed, economically vibrant country amidst a rather gloomy world economic scenario. This is no empty boast. Statistics

bear testimony to this claim. While some of the more advanced nations are still struggling to recover from the economic recession, the Malaysian economy, after recording a growth rate of almost 10 per cent in 1990, is poised to register a GDP growth rate of between 8 and 9 per cent this year. Early results have put our GDP growth rate for the first quarter of 1991 at 9.2 per cent.

Due to the prudent and liberal policies implemented by the Barisan Nasional government since 1986, Malaysians are now able to enjoy the fruits of an unprecedented economic boom. For this achievement, we are grateful to the wise and bold leadership of Dr Mahathir Mohamad. As a result of his foresight and firm implementation of projects to harness the potential of our country, Malaysia is being recognized and credited by international agencies, such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, as a model of economic development for developing countries.

The 1990s and beyond take us into a totally new era of economic challenges. We want to join the ranks of the developed nations by the year 2020. To achieve this, we must begin by adopting a more positive attitude towards the new challenges. Let there be no doubt that a zestful and united nation can attain what it sets out to do. What we must do is to consolidate all our present activities so that we can make use of the new opportunities before us better.

The NDP has laid out the path in pursuit of our vision. The MCA has toiled and persevered on behalf of the Chinese community through the National Economic Consultative Council to ensure that the resulting NDP will be able to harness the full potential of all its citizens. We persevered and toiled while our opponents, the DAP, gave up and absconded from its responsibilities by pulling out from the NECC. Today, we are glad to say, as a result of our efforts achieved in the spirit of the Barisan Nasional, the NDP has adopted an open and liberal approach to encourage economic growth with social justice for all.

The 1990s will be a new era for not only the Chinese community but Malaysians in general to contribute constructively to enhance the peace, harmony and prosperity of Malaysia. Malaysians

are beginning to be acutely aware of the benefits of enhancing the peace and harmony that we have all been enjoying since independence. As a result, the people have progressed and attained a much higher standard of living. Our per capita income has increased from a mere RM775 in 1957 to almost RM7,000 by 1992. If we are able to enhance the process of peace and harmony, our income should increase to about RM17,000 by the year 2000.

With such a scenario of peace, stability and prosperity, there will be no room for the opposition, especially the DAP, to be consistently critical, negative and destructive (CCND). All the DAP wants is to stir up the negative emotions of the people by deliberately misinterpreting government policies so that the *rakyat* would react negatively to the government. They do not care that in the process, the lifestyle of the people and the progress of the country may be destroyed.

I am glad to say that Malaysians have now seen through the DAP's tactics. They are rejecting DAP's CCND strategies. They are now responding very favourably to the constructive approach the MCA had adopted in representing the Chinese community in the context of national development. When the economic cake is being expanded rapidly, there is more than enough room to meet every citizen's major wants and wishes and to fulfill the hopes of our future generations.

The 1990s therefore is an era to be constructive, not destructive. Dr Mahathir Mohamad has already set the direction by outlining the country's goals and objectives up to the year 2020. Let us now focus on how we as Malaysians can contribute to the realization of these objectives and discard all negative elements that may blur us from achieving this vision. There can be no gain for anyone if the country fails to meet these goals and objectives. On the other hand, the attainment of our vision would mean a better tomorrow for us and our future generations.

The MCA has always stood by its principles and beliefs in service of the community, undeterred by any criticisms hurled against it and unwavering by unfair accusations by some quarters.

Time has proven the sincerity, maturity and far-sightedness of the Party. In the 1950s, the Party boldly mobilized the Chinese against the communists. In the 1960s, we emerged as the first country which successfully defeated the communists to become a thriving democracy much respected by the world. Now, we see the communist system collapsing everywhere. One after another, formerly communist societies now want to follow the path of the market economy towards greater prosperity, a path we have most wisely taken since independence.

In the 1970s and the 1980s, the MCA mobilized the Chinese to work with the Malays and other races to upgrade their economic status. Though the Party suffered some political set-backs after the destructive exploitation of the issue by the DAP, the MCA fought on undaunted. Today, we have an economy with full participation by all races. Today, all communities feel secure enough to work towards the creation of a genuine Bangsa Malaysia.

The 1990s will see the MCA standing firm on these same principles and beliefs, fighting what it believes will be the best for the Chinese community within the context of multi-ethnic Malaysia. The 1990s and beyond will see the MCA mobilizing the community to work with all the other races to make Malaysia into a developed and respected country will full social justice for all.

On the international front, Dr Mahathir Mohamad has made the country respected for its views, by the manner in which he has represented the views of the developing countries, most recently at the Earth Summit in Brazil. We have emerged from the Rio Earth Summit as a well respected spokesman of the South. Recently, the MCA too has achieved success, though on a smaller scale. At the recent World Chinese Conference in Mauritius, Malaysia brought to the world's attention what the Chinese in Malaysia have achieved by working together with the other communities. Above economic and political powers, we have achieved unity amongst our different communities. At the conference, we were proud to tell everyone that the Chinese, Malays and Indians and all the other races are together building a united Malaysian nation.

Politically and economically, the MCA has made headway in fostering unity amongst the different communities. The stage is now set to extend these efforts to the sharing of cultural values. Presently, we have reached the stage where there is a great deal of sharing of cultures in the food we enjoy, the clothes we wear, the words we use, and the music and drama we appreciate. *Satay, yong tow foo* and *banana-leaf rice* have become the food of all Malaysians. Television programmes such as Tamil movies and Malay and Chinese dramas are equally enjoyed by all Malaysians. The Indian singer Mohan has thoroughly thrilled his Chinese fans with his Chinese songs. Similarly, Andre Goh is a well-known singer of Malay numbers.

The sharing of the cultures of all races can and must serve as a factor that will further bind us into a common race. Now no longer are Chinese New Year, Hari Raya, Deepavali and Christmas celebrated only by certain communities. All Malaysians join in the festivities. In the process, Malaysians have come up with a unique system of "open house", when we welcome to our houses, all those who want to share the joyous spirit of the occasion. All these are but few examples of how Malaysians have over the years, grown to not only respect each others' cultures but to enjoy each others' cultures as well. The MCA is committed to work towards this goal. The MCA will work to see this ambition fulfilled. We will promote shows and events that will involve the cultural traits of our diverse communities. And the time cannot be more appropriate than now. We are enjoying the fruits of success in our efforts to foster political and economic unity. Let that success now motivate us all in the new endeavour towards a greater sharing and integration of all our cultural values and traits.

One of our major economic challenges in the coming decades is human resource development. Quality and not quantity is the chief concern here. As Malaysia gears itself for more rapid industrialization, the need for skilled and trained manpower increases. In this context, the future of Malaysia's industrialization plans may very well rest in an effective human resource programme.

TAR College's expansion programme will go some way towards alleviating the problem. The response to the TAR College donation drive by all communities had been overwhelming. It demonstrates the commitment of the 530,000 MCA members to see that our future generations will have much better tertiary education opportunities. It demonstrates the willingness of Malaysians to work together for a good cause. As Party President, I am deeply touched by the generosity and show of support from people from different walks of life and from different communities to the College fund. The MCA will see that this fund is used to benefit the country. We will certainly not disappoint those who have put their trust in the College by their generous contributions.

We can face the future either one of two ways. Positively or negatively. Constructively or destructively. We can choose to approach the challenges by viewing each one of them positively and constructively. Or we can choose to adopt a negative attitude by deliberately misinterpreting policies and strategies. We in the MCA have a vision for the Chinese community in Malaysia. We will mobilize the Chinese community to adopt a positive and constructive approach towards national development. We foresee the day when the more than six million Chinese will work with the others as one. Let there be no exceptions. Differences in socio-economic or educational background should never be allowed to divide us and prevent us from attaining the goals before us.

This vision will guide the MCA into the next decade and beyond. We will lead the Chinese community to join hands with our fellow Malaysians to work to unleash the full potential of our nation, building Malaysia into a modern industrial economy, yet caring and sharing enough for it to be the best home for all. It is now time for us to look forward to the year ahead of us. Ask ourselves what more can be done for the betterment of the Chinese community in particular and the country in general. Do not allow the successes we have achieved for ourselves thus far lull us into a false sense of satisfaction. Instead, let us seize upon every opportunity given to us to do more. Face the challenges ahead with renewed

commitment and greater consensus and co-operation. Let us sink our differences and work together for the betterment of the community and the nation.

Chapter 7

WORKING WITH THE COMMUNITY

MALAYSIA has changed from an agricultural-based economy to a rapidly industrializing nation. From being just one of many developing countries, we have emerged as a most sought after destination for investments. Foreign investments in Malaysia expanded from RM959.6 million in 1985 to RM17,724.1 million in 1992; an almost twenty-fold increase over the seven-year period. Malaysia is now one of the few full-employment economies in the world. Everywhere, we see the emergence of factories and office complexes, offering employment to tens of thousands of Malaysians. All over the country, we see housing estates, shopping centres and leisure parks being built to cater to the needs of increasingly prosperous Malaysians. We have bounced back from the nightmares of the early 1980s, when world recession caused the prices of our commodities to plummet, throwing thousands of Malaysians out of a job. But with Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the helm, our economy was turned around.

Many other facets of Malaysian life that we enjoy today can also be attributed to Dr Mahathir's vision and foresight. These include the Proton Sagas and now the Wiras, the hotels and resorts

A keynote address delivered at the 40th MCA Annual General Assembly in June 1993.

emerging throughout the length and breadth of the country, the green pathways and floodlights of Kuala Lumpur, TV3, the North-South Highway and many others that have benefited Malaysians from all walks of life. We have also risen to such international prominence as never before. Malaysia is a prime mover of the EAEC; our Proton Saga is a bestseller in the United Kingdom; our expertise in plantation, industry and educational facilities are sought after by other developing countries. The list goes on. Malaysia is now standing up to be counted, to be respected and to serve as an inspiration for other developing countries. The MCA is thankful that we have Dr Mahathir to lead the Barisan Nasional government. As President, I would like to pledge MCA's full and unequivocal support to Dr Mahathir and pray he would continue to lead us for many, many more years to come.

We are very fortunate that we are able to live in peace and harmony despite our ethnic, cultural and religious differences. Much of this is due to the politics advocated and practised by the Barisan Nasional government. One of respect and understanding for our brothers who are different from us in religion and culture. One that calls on all Malaysians to be constructive in our attitude. One that calls on all Malaysians to sacrifice for the sake of national unity. I have no doubt that this special Barisan Nasional culture of mutual respect and co-operation and mutual sacrifice for the common good will be maintained and strengthened.

In Dr Mahathir's own words: "leadership often meant leadership in sensitivity and consideration for others, . . . and in sacrifice, not leadership in dictating decisions and reaping benefits." Sensitivity, co-operation and sacrifice for others have always been the key words for our achievements. It must continue to be the vital factor that will decide the success or failure of our economic and social ambitions. Confrontation must never be a way of solving problems.

The DAP, which advocates confrontation as a means of achieving its aim, obviously does not have the good of the nation in mind. The Chinese community must never again accept the DAP's

strategy of being consistently critical, negative and destructive. The Chinese community must never again be hoodwinked by the DAP's "all talk and no action" tactics. The community must realize that it cannot afford to split itself into two halves: one for the government and the other for the opposition. In Malaysia, the political reality is that the Chinese by themselves cannot form the government. We have to be united within a multiracial Barisan Nasional government to ensure more effective political representation for the community.

The MCA will always play its role within the context of the Barisan Nasional government by garnering the support of the Chinese community in working together with the other communities to put the country on a firmer footing politically, economically, socially and culturally. We will continue to fight and to weed out elements that call for dissension and division amongst Malaysians. We will continue to mobilize the Chinese community to rally behind the Barisan Nasional, to rally behind our Prime Minister in pursuit of Vision 2020. The MCA offers the only alternative to the Chinese that is workable. The stand adopted by the Party has proved to be effective in furthering the interest of the community and the nation. Our record is proof of this. This is a fine example of what a party can achieve if we adopt the correct approach. Constructive in pursuit of national unity. Not destructive, which will result in fragmentation.

The healthy interracial mix and harmony of the nation has been reflected in all facets of our lives today. Speaking of the Chinese in particular, the Malaysian Chinese of today speak the Chinese language, eat Chinese food, wear Chinese clothes and appreciate Chinese classical songs. However, we do more than this. We also eat Malay, Indian and Western food, wear other clothes and enjoy the music of other communities. Similarly with the other communities, their dress, food and the like have gone through this process of evolution. We have Indians and Malays singing Chinese songs; Malays and Indians enjoying and selling *ling chee kang*, *tow foo fah* and *yong tow foo* are common sights in our hawker squares.

This sharing and interaction of cultures will in no way make anyone less of a Chinese, or an Indian or a Malay but much more Malaysian. This will bring us closer to the creation of a Bangsa Malaysia.

MCA had remarkable success in the last year. The Tunku Abdul Rahman College Trust fund was successfully concluded. Malaysian generosity has been the vital ingredient that saw to the Party successfully reaching its target of RM25 million for the College. We in the MCA would like once again to thank our friends for their kind efforts and help towards this project. Having achieved what we have set out to do for TAR College, the Party is now directing its energy to improving the standard of education in primary school, especially those in rural and other less developed areas. The Langkawi Project was launched for this purpose.

Statistics show that pupils in rural schools need our urgent attention. Amongst the 349 new village Chinese primary schools, eleven registered a zero pass rate in the Bahasa Malaysia (Tulisan) paper in the UPSR in 1991. In total, 56 of these schools had a passing rate of 10 per cent or less. Similarly, we find that the performance of rural Tamil primary schools and the rural *sekolah kebangsaan* lag significantly behind their urban counterparts. We have identified a few causes. While pupils from urban schools have easy access to libraries and resource centres, sadly this is missing in rural areas. Many rural areas do not even have a book shop where pupils can browse around. Clearly, this must be checked.

Thus far, the MCA has launched the first fifteen Resource Centres under the Langkawi Project. These centres have been well received by the people. Everyday, parents queue up at the centres with their children, long before opening hours. The future that these parents saw in such centres for their children has made many call these resource centres as centres for hope and change. Under the Langkawi Project, we propose to build a total of 600 such Resource Centres in the rural areas.

I wish to stress that the Langkawi Project is not about physical development alone. The Project stresses more on the mental side of

educational development. We firmly believe that the attainment of educational excellence is the joint responsibility of students, parents, teachers and the community. Therefore, the Langkawi Project seeks to launch an attitudinal change amongst parents with respect to education. Parents must realize the long-term results of a good education for their children. They must be aware of the moral support they should give to their children in ensuring that they gets the best from the educational opportunities provided. Under the Langkawi Project, we are urging all parents to spend at least an hour a day with their children to revise their school work.

I am happy to note that the response from the public to the Project has been encouraging. Villagers have offered to build the resource centre through a *gotong-royong* style to save on costs. Others have donated building materials or their time. Yet others have donated books and other educational materials they do not need. The Project has also received the support of professional groups such as the National Union of the Teaching Profession, Lions Club, Malaysian Medical Association, the National Council of Women's Organization and others. This development, no doubt, will serve to push us in the MCA to work harder to implement the Project to ensure that a larger segment will be able to benefit from it.

A developed nation like the one Malaysia aspires to be will have sufficient opportunities for those who are willing to work hard. Already, we are enjoying the fruits of a near-zero unemployment rate and a higher quality of life. Malaysians who are willing to work can easily get a job.

To enable us to serve the community more effectively, we must reach out further to the people. I want all MCA leaders and members to keep in constant contact with all the professional, social and welfare groups that form the community. We must continuously extend our hand in friendship to the hawkers, petty traders, farmers, factory workers, small businessmen, taxi drivers, teachers, youths, women organizations, senior citizens and others. In the process, we can lend our ears to their problems, hopes and dreams.

Then we can put our thinking caps together to arrive at solutions that can bring a better tomorrow for all of us.

I want all MCA leaders and members to extend a helping hand to the poor, the aged, the orphans, the disabled and the women in distress. Many of us are fortunate that we are blessed with an education and have a successful career. But we must not forget that there are many, many who are not as fortunate. We must therefore, commit ourselves to reach out to those in need of our help, to touch their hearts, to assure them that we are with them, and will do whatever we can to uplift their economic lot. In particular, I want all our MCA members to consider adopting children of these families and provide them with the needed emotional and financial support so that they can have as good a headstart as our own children. In the process, we will create a truly caring and sharing society.

The MCA must leave its footprint on the pages of the nation's history as a party which rose to the occasion and successfully brought Malaysia towards a new era of progress, harmony and prosperity. We must strive and forge ahead in unity with other communities to ensure that Malaysia will remain forever as the best home for all. Do not be deterred or waylaid by the efforts of the DAP. We must intensify our efforts towards strengthening national unity in realization of a Bangsa Malaysia.

Chapter 8

IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

SINCE ITS FORMATION in 1949, the MCA has worked to bring progress to the community and the nation. From the Emergency in 1948 to Malaysia's Independence in 1957, through the challenges of the NEP era and the economic recession of the 1980s, the MCA had remained steadfast with the people and our partners in the Barisan Nasional, toiling to ensure a brighter future for all Malaysians. Over the 1988-1990 period, our hard work and dedication in the National Economic Consultative Council resulted in the more visionary and liberal National Development Policy. More recently, our efforts in expanding TAR College, in upgrading rural education through the Langkawi Project and our Fund Raising Campaign to help Independent Chinese Schools exemplify our mission to ensure an even brighter future for the Chinese community in particular and all Malaysians in general.

I am very happy to note that the contributions and support of all Malaysians have helped the Party to successfully raise a total of RM30 million for the TAR College. This, together with the RM30 million contribution made by the government will enable the Party to implement the TAR College expansion programme. Work on the main campus should be completed by 1995 while plans for the

A keynote address delivered at the MCA Annual General Meeting in June 1994.

building of the Penang and Segamat branch campuses are now being finalized. The Penang branch campus will take in its first batch of students in July this year, occupying a temporary site in Jalan Travers. On completion of the expansion plans, the College will be able to double its enrolment from the present 8,500 students to 16,000 students. This will contribute in no small measure towards providing more places to our youths for a tertiary education.

The fund raising campaign for the Langkawi Project has also been successfully completed. I am glad to report that we have now reached our target of RM20 million for the Project. The MCA will now push on to ensure more Resource Centres are built throughout the country for the benefit of poor rural students. We will also mobilize our members to organize more activities, such as kindergarten classes, home-industry activities, adoption projects, etc. This will raise not only the educational level of the children but also the economic status of the family so that the children can have a more conducive environment to unleash their full economic potential. This aspect of the Langkawi Project, that is the pursuit of educational excellence for the rural poor schoolchildren, is a long-term aim of the Party and will remain part and parcel of our long-term plan of action.

These projects clearly demonstrate the Party's desire to be constantly with the people. They show the Party's commitment in fulfilling its objective in understanding the problems of the people and undertaking projects to help them. They show the caring and sharing of Party members at all levels in their desire to serve the *rakyat* better.

This year, the MCA has embarked on yet another education project to raise funds for the Independent Chinese Schools. The success and progress of the Independent Chinese Schools during the last few decades were due in no small measure to the untiring efforts of the MCA leaders and members at all levels, which date back to the 1940s. From the very start, the bond between these schools and the local MCA branch had been strong. In many parts of the country, local MCA leaders were also patrons of these



The author and his favourite bicycle in Taiping in 1954.



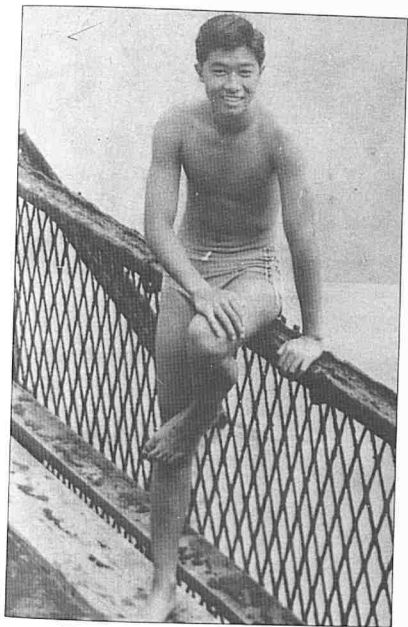
The author with his mother in Taiping, Perak, in 1956.



Citizenship: MCA's noble efforts in the early 1950s.



Tun Tan Cheng Lock campaigning for the Alliance in 1954.



The author as a student at the Royal Military College
in Sungei Besi, Kuala Lumpur, in 1960.



With Malaysia's First Prime Minister,
Tunku Abdul Rahman, in 1980.



The author singing with his wife, Datin Ena Ling, to raise funds for TAR College in 1991.



With Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad at MCA's Chinese New Year Open House in 1992.



MCA's Annual General Assembly in 1992.



The author frying yao cho kui to raise funds
for Tunku Abdul Rahman College in 1993.



With MCA Ministers during one of their regular meetings with Dong Jiao Zhong, the Chinese Educational Movement, in 1993.



Enjoying a meal with MCA grassroots at a hawker stall in 1994.



Meeting students at the Asahan Resource Centre in 1994.



With Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad and other Barisan Nasional leaders in 1994.



The author in one of his informal meetings with
Chinese community leaders in 1994.



"We are one happy family": the author with Deputy Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim, in 1994.



Handing books to poor students under the Langkawi Project in 1994.



The author meeting Jiang Zemin, President of the People's Republic of China, in Kuala Lumpur, 1994.

schools. They sat on school boards and on committees which financed and managed the running of these schools. The MCA has always willingly extended the outreach of its network and organizational ability to mobilize the Chinese community in support of projects for Independent Chinese Schools. And while the MCA is proud of this record, we will not rest on our laurels. We will expand our efforts to assist Independent Chinese Schools. The MCA will always co-operate with the community so that these schools can be further developed.

The focus of this project is to raise funds for the sixty Independent Chinese Schools throughout the country. In the first phase, MCA members will be encouraged to contribute a minimum of RM10 each. Taking into account the 600,000 membership of the Party, this will give the fund an initial RM6 million. The Huaren Education Foundation, a tax-exempt Foundation, will set up a special account to receive and manage this Fund. We aim to complete this first phase within six months of its launch. Within this six months, the 600,000 MCA members from throughout the country will organize a series of events such as walkathons, jogathons, bicycletons, thousand-people dinners, etc. in support of the Independent Chinese Schools. We want to show the members of the Boards of Governors, Parent Teachers Associations, Old Boys Associations, the teachers and students of these schools that the MCA members care for them and support them in efforts to strengthen the schools.

The TAR College expansion plan, the Langkawi Project and the Independent Chinese School fund raising campaign are but only some of the activities of the Party in ensuring more and better educational opportunities for all Malaysians. The Party strongly believes that education and human resource development are important cornerstones of the country's plans. We will therefore continue to invest in our human capital, to train and educate our young to be fully confident and capable of facing the best in the world. In this regard, I can assure you, the Party will continue to implement more programmes to uplift the level of education in the country.

Besides education, the Party is also organizing many activities to expand the community's involvement and participation in the nation's economic, cultural and social spheres. With the help of the country's successful entrepreneurs, the Party has organized a series of economics seminars through-out the country to explain to the people the wide array of new economic opportunities available in the nation and the Far East, particularly in the area of small industries. With the many privatisation projects in Malaysia and the opening of the China, Vietnam, Latin America and South African markets, the MCA wants the people to fully harness these opportunities and in the process lead the nation towards integrating its economy with the rest of the world.

Politically, 1994 saw the MCA expand its presence in Sabah, with its first state assemblyman. Sabah MCA has grown tremendously to eighteen divisions with 10,000 members in the span of three years. The concern that the interest of the Chinese community in Sabah should be well looked after was reflected in the frequent visits by Party leaders to the state as well as in the number of special activities such as cultural celebrations, briefings and seminars on current issues and dialogues with the local community. Now that the MCA is part of the Barisan Nasional state government, the Party will further strengthen and consolidate the Party machinery to serve the *rakyat*. The Party's long-term objective is to lead the Sabah Chinese community into the mainstream of national development.

In the cultural sphere, the Party has organized a series of festivals in Seremban, Ipoh, Penang, Klang and Melaka. The response of the people has been overwhelming. Tens of thousands of people turned out on each occasion to witness and cheer the champion lion and dragon troupes, and celebrate the vibrance of our multicultural society with the singers and the dances.

To inculcate a spirit of caring and sharing amongst one another, and to strengthen family values, the Party has also organized a series of celebrations honouring mothers and families. Through these activities, we want all our mothers to be fully appreciated, re-

spected and honoured. We want our members to hold steadfast to our traditional values of respect for the elders and family and to remain a race with high moral values; humble in our hours of success and resilient in our moments of challenges.

While the MCA is mobilizing our party structure to work for the community, to expand educational opportunities and to further involve citizens in the economic, cultural and social spheres, what has the DAP done? Throughout all this, the DAP has not just remained silent on their ideas and plans; they tried to distract and confuse the people so that our plans will fail. They have remained true to their words. The MCA will not be distracted by the negative and destructive paths of the DAP.

The MCA will not be distracted by the DAP because we know that the 1990s will pose many new challenges to the community and the country. We believe the time has come to garner all Chinese support towards realizing the goals set out in Vision 2020. As the nation spends the next two-and-a-half decades trying to realize the nine central challenges outlined in Vision 2020, the vital factor that would ensure the success or failure of these objectives would be unity. Unity within the Chinese community. And unity within all Malaysians.

Will we be able to sink our differences and strengthen our resolve to work jointly to place Malaysia within the ranks of developed nations? Malaysians have shown that differing ethnic and cultural backgrounds have been no hindrance to the nation's political stability and economic progress and development. The challenge before us today is to ensure that this fundamental factor that had brought us peace, progress and prosperity will not be shaken. Specifically within the Chinese community, we must also be able to put national interests above self-interest. We must act as a community to work towards realizing the common goal of helping the nation fulfill Vision 2020.

Politically, the Chinese community must respond to the calls of the MCA to contribute their talents and service to the Party for the betterment of the community as well as for Malaysians. The

Party's efforts within the Barisan Nasional government have proved to be successful. This is evident in our everyday lives. Countries which had existed longer than us still have to deal with problems relating to the various ethnicities of their populace. They are still battling to resolve the basic problems of peace and unity, let alone economic development. We in Malaysia are thankfully different. The foresight of Barisan Nasional Party leaders and the spirit of mutual respect, give-and-take, and common consensus have brought the people peace and harmony. It has brought political stability. And with political stability, an attractive investment climate, thus economic development and a higher quality of life for all Malaysians.

We have seen, read and heard about trouble in countries like Rwanda where ethnic clashes have brought nothing but hardship and untold sufferings to all its peoples. Our hearts ache for the people of Bosnia who have to suffer untold misery at the hands of the Serbs. We are indeed thankful Malaysia is different from these countries. The wisdom of the politics practised by the Barisan Nasional government is clearly evident. It is a practice that takes care of the interests of all communities, not just one. We must understand the realities of the demands of a multi-ethnic, multicultural and multireligious society like Malaysia.

I urge all Chinese to throw their support behind the Party to ensure that the peace and harmony in this country will not be threatened in anyway. MCA must have the undivided and unequivocal support of each and every Chinese so that the Party can effectively champion the country's aspirations and interests in the government. Reject the calls of parties like the DAP which are short-sighted in their political struggle. The DAP is now bankrupt of political ideas, especially after betraying the Chinese in Kelantan. In 1990, the party called on the community to bring change to the government; and now while the Chinese in Kelantan are suffering under the short-sighted policies of the PAS-led government, the DAP has remained totally silent.

I am sure come the next General Election, the DAP will come out with new slogans to raise the emotions of the Chinese, as well as hide their mistakes. I appeal to the Chinese community not to be misled and confused by the shoutings of the DAP again. Let us keep on reminding ourselves that it has done nothing positive and constructive in the past, and will only be able to arouse the emotions of the people. The MCA's track record has been a solid one, compared with that of the DAP. And I am confident that this excellent record will enable the Party to capture seats currently held by the DAP in the next general elections.

Why should the Chinese sacrifice the progress and development and peace and harmony that our forefathers have worked so diligently for? Why should we throw this all away and allow our children to face an uncertain future? The DAP has nothing to show after all these years. They have not been doing anything because they have still got nothing to show! The people were fooled into giving the opposition a chance in Kelantan. Do not be fooled again.

Passionate calls for the people to reject government policies are just romantic notions. We sometimes allow ourselves to be aroused by such calls. The opposition relies on such tactics to veil their inaction on the issues. Extremism of any kind must be rejected, strongly rejected. To nurture a united, peaceful and harmonious Malaysia, we require leaders like Dr Mahathir Mohamad, our Prime Minister, and Anwar Ibrahim, our Deputy Prime Minister, who are far-sighted and able to give and take. It will be the people who will finally make the difference. Between a nation that will consistently fight and quarrel over extreme demands of any one community. Or a nation that lives peacefully and harmoniously, making the country a better place for all. There can be no long-term economic growth without stability.

A country cannot hope to prosper if it lives in isolation or is indifferent to changes elsewhere. Globalization is the key word to the country's progress. I urge the Chinese community again to translate the approach adopted by all Malaysians to build up Ma-

laysia into efforts to build economic, cultural and bridges of friendship and co-operation with other countries, especially those within the region. Malaysians have successfully demonstrated how they have worked harmoniously and overcome their differences in languages, religions and cultures to work united as one, to build Malaysia into what it is today. Let us now extend this same approach as we seek to further develop our country through linkages and co-operation with other countries for mutual benefit.

To do so, it is important that we extend not only our lingual capability in Bahasa Malaysia, English, Mandarin and Tamil, but also our understanding of the business ethics and culture of our neighbours. The world is a global village and the opening up of new markets in China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Latin America and South Africa have created exciting opportunities for Malaysians to tap these opportunities. Our capabilities to do so should not be hindered by any reluctance on our part to learn their language and their cultures and ways of life.

I urge all MCA members to apply themselves seriously to the task that is ahead of us. We in the MCA cannot be satisfied with our past efforts alone. We must assign for ourselves a greater task ahead of us. And that task is to garner the support of the whole Chinese community so that we can act in unison in fulfilling Party and national objectives. The mobilization of the support and commitment of each and every Chinese in this country is vital for the country in achieving our vision of a developed Malaysia. I leave you with this challenge.

Chapter 9

MORE MALAYSIAN, NO LESS CHINESE

THE YEAR 1992 has been a fairly good one for Malaysia. The national economy continued to experience a strong growth. Despite the sluggishness of the recovery in major industrialized countries, our economy registered a growth rate of 8.0 per cent for 1992. For 1993, we are also expecting a strong growth of 8.0 per cent.

Malaysians are now enjoying a better quality of life as a result of this strong growth. Per capita income has increased to an average of RM7,500. This puts us into the bracket of an upper middle income developing country. Malaysians are also not in want of jobs. The strong economic growth has reduced the unemployment rate to less than 4 per cent, a figure considered to signify full employment. In other words, every Malaysian who is able and willing to work will be able to find a job commensurating with his ability.

The encouraging growth experienced by the Malaysian economy has enabled the government to provide more benefits to the *rakyat*, as reflected in the 1993 Budget proposals. We see the government's commitment in enhancing the quality of life for all Malaysians. Personal income taxes have been reduced and import duties on a wide range of goods (630 items to be exact) have been re-

A keynote address delivered at the 44th MCA Anniversary Celebrations in February 1993.

moved or reduced. On the corporate side, the development tax has been abolished and corporate income tax reduced with a view to enhancing Malaysia as an attractive investment centre in the region. All these will in turn be translated into a higher standard of living for Malaysians in the future.

We in Malaysia have been very fortunate in that we are able to live in peace and harmony despite our ethnic, cultural and religious differences. While others can only marvel at us, we in Malaysia have been able to sustain and enhance this environment of peace and harmony for over three decades of independence. Much of this is due to the politics advocated and practised by the Barisan Nasional government. One of respect and understanding for our brothers who are different from us in religion and culture. One that calls on all Malaysians to be constructive in our attitude. Under the Barisan Nasional government, I have no doubt that this environment will be maintained and strengthened.

Further economic and social progress will depend on the willingness of Malaysians to maintain this peace and harmony. What is worrying are attempts by opposition parties to disrupt this peace and harmony. The DAP especially, for selfish political motives, have sought to confuse the people by throwing wild accusations at the government and seeking to compartmentalize Malaysians. They have no concern for the loss that people will experience as a result of their actions. Obviously, the welfare of the country and the people are not amongst their objectives.

The importance of unity has been underlined by the government, working within the framework of the Barisan Nasional coalition. The Barisan Nasional government ensures that there is sufficient representation from the country's various communities in all areas of endeavours. There is no monopoly for any one party.

Politically, the stability under the Barisan Nasional government comes from the spirit of consensus adopted by all members of the coalition. The coalition ensures that the views of the different communities are heard at all levels of the government: from the village development committees, to the town councils, the state gov-

ernments and the Federal Cabinet. Even in states where the Chinese community is a very small minority, such as in Terengganu and Kelantan, there used to be Chinese representation in the state EXCO under the Barisan Nasional. Until of course, the DAP came along and destroyed this system all in the name of change.

Economically, the government's philosophy is to provide ample opportunities for all. The ones with initiative and entrepreneurial flair will be rewarded, while sufficient protection and assistance will be provided to the less experienced and the "have nots". The liberal policies adopted by the government have created a conducive environment for all to venture into business. In fact, Malaysia is now regarded as a very good developing country for foreign investments. More importantly, economic success has benefited all Malaysians; more jobs, better quality of life, irrespective of their ethnic origin.

Similarly, each and every community is free to practise and carry out its cultural activities not only without fear but with government sanctions and assistance. Take lion dance as an example. The Malaysian Chinese community not only can perform the lion dance anytime it wishes, but has also produced the top two lion dance troupes in a recent international lion dance competition. There is complete freedom of religious practices. We have all grown to respect mosques as places of worship for the Muslims, churches for the Christians, and temples for the Buddhists and Hindus. All these houses of worship exist harmoniously alongside each other. These have become permanent features of our landscape and are in fact major tourist attractions.

In education, the Indian and Chinese primary schools form an integral part of the country's educational system, ensuring mother tongue education to all those who so wish. Since the establishment of the first Chinese primary schools in the country, these schools have come a long way in terms of both the achievements of their students as well as their role within the national education system. In Malaysia, Chinese education does not stop at the primary level. Students can pursue the Chinese language through secondary

schools right up to the Chinese Studies Department in University Malaya, which is amongst the top Chinese language research centres in the world.

At the tertiary level, the MCA has made a great effort to bring higher education opportunities to more Malaysians. For this purpose, the MCA embarked on a fund raising project to collect funds to upgrade the College's main campus in Setapak and to build two branch campuses. I am happy to note that through the generosity of Malaysians from all walks of life and ethnic backgrounds, TAR College was able to raise RM25 million. This amount, together with the RM25 million allocated to the College under the Sixth Malaysia Plan, will enable the College to undertake its plan of upgrading the main campus in Setapak and set up two branches; one in Segamat and the other in Penang.

The projects are already taking shape. Work on the expansion of the Setapak campus and planning for the two branch campuses have already begun and are on schedule. All these programmes, when fully completed in 1995, will mean 16,000 places annually for young and aspiring Malaysians seeking higher educational opportunities in the technical and vocational fields. It will mean the realization of the aspirations and dreams of 16,000 young men and women for higher education.

I have briefly sketched the present situation of Malaysians of Chinese origin in this country. However, when our forefathers first set foot in this country, they spoke only Mandarin or the Chinese dialects, ate only Chinese food, wore the *yi fu* and *cheong sam* and enjoyed listening to only Chinese poetry and songs. The Chinese of today still speak Chinese, eat Chinese food, wear Chinese clothes and appreciate Chinese classical songs. Nevertheless, we are different in that we have gone through a process of cultural evolution; we know what our forefathers knew and more. We do what our forefathers did and more. We also eat Malay, Indian and Western food, wear other clothes and enjoy the music of other communities. Our clothes are not confined to the *yi fu* or the *cheong sam* alone. We also wear the western skirt and blouse or the *kebaya*. We

do not eat *yong tow foo* or *char kwei teow* alone. We take equal delight in *nasi lemak*, *roti canai*, *capati* or the western steak.

Our language of communication is not confined to Mandarin, Cantonese or Hokkien. We are equally well versed in Bahasa Malaysia and English. Similarly, we see more Malaysians being multilingual; Malays such as Royal Professor Ungku Aziz, Ghazali Shafie and Sanusi Junid can read Chinese characters. The Indian singer Mohan speaks Chinese better than I do. In fact, don't take for granted that a Malay or an Indian cannot understand what you are saying if you talk about him in Mandarin. You may be surprised!

Similarly with the other communities, their dress, food and the like have gone through this process of cultural evolution. We have Indians and Malays singing Chinese songs, and very well at it too because we have Mohan cutting a very successful Mandarin album. Similarly, Malays and Indians selling *ling chee kang*, *tow foo fab* and *yong tow foo* are common sights in our hawker squares. This sharing of cultures will in no way make anyone less of a Chinese, or an Indian or a Malay, but much more Malaysian.

Such interracial mixing has also become more evident in the sports and cultural arena in recent years. Sports which were previously regarded as purely Chinese, like ping pong and basketball, have seen increasing non-Chinese participation. Similarly, Malay cultural dances like the *Dikir Barat* and the *Boria* are beginning to attract and interest more non-Malays. In fact, amongst the best *Dikir Barat* groups I have seen is the one performed by our Kelantan MCA members. Lion dance troupes are now attracting more and more non-Chinese members. The *sepak takraw* has attracted non-Malays. The end result of all these developments is that we become more Malaysian. And we are thus closer to the creation of a Bangsa Malaysia.

Such a development augurs well for the future. The MCA will work towards further integrating Malaysians of different communities by enhancing this multicultural lifestyle. Speaking for the Chinese community, the MCA will encourage Chinese to adopt a

positive attitude towards such sharing of different cultures. We will impress on the Chinese community that by doing so they will not be regarded as being less Chinese. Instead, they will be more than Chinese, and we will all be more Malaysian.

Excellence in education is the key to future economic and social success. Accordingly, excellence in education will form the basis for the country to achieve the goals outlined in Vision 2020. MCA is concerned that the Chinese community fully understands the importance of education in raising the standard of living not only for themselves but more so for future generations. It is for this very reason that the MCA has adopted the Langkawi Plan, a national project to uplift the standard of education in Chinese primary schools, especially those located in new villages and other less developed areas.

This project hopes to create an awareness of the need for higher education and training. It will adopt a multi-pronged strategy. The project hopes to inform parents of the need to ensure that their child gets the best support in his academic pursuit. The point we want to stress is, excellence in education will yield long-term gains and that parents must not only look at the short-term returns. Our slogan: *only an hour a day, and we can ensure the success of our children's education.*

The project will also see an operation uplift or an adoption plan whereby MCA leaders will adopt selected needy children of all races and help them by visiting them frequently, providing them the needed financial assistance and inviting them to the leaders' homes. The interaction and fellowship resulting from such an adoption scheme will further strengthen the understanding between the leaders and the people. We will also mobilize TAR College students and arrange for these students to stay with new village families. During their stay in the new villages, they would help guide the students in their studies and generally serve as role models.

On the physical side, the MCA seeks to build educational Resource Centres for all the new villages in the country. These Re-

source Centres will be equipped with books, educational tools and toys to help students in the learning process.

Wanita MCA will make use of these Resource Centres for nursery activities so that preschool children can be given a head-start. Wanita MCA will also mobilize the women folk to undertake income-generating activities such as handicraft making, sewing and other cottage industries. These products will be marketed through various supermarket chains such as Parkson Grand. Through this, the MCA hopes to improve the standard of living of the new villagers by improving their household income.

As in the TAR College project, the project will involve all levels of MCA personnel, from the grassroots to the Party leaders. We hope that with the support of the people, the people would be able to benefit fully from this project. In the process of doing so, the MCA hopes that the *rakyat*, especially those in the rural, less developed areas, will appreciate the importance of education in uplifting the quality of their life.

The DAP's trademark of being consistently critical, negative and destructive has again been reinforced. Unlike the MCA, which chose to work for the people by adopting a positive attitude through useful discussions and negotiations, the DAP, for all its shouting, has again nothing to show. The party's refusal to vote for the recent Constitutional Amendment Bill is yet more proof. Similar to what it did by pulling out of the National Economic Consultative Council to draw up the Second Outline Perspective Plan, the DAP again absconded from its responsibility by staying away from the voting (refraining from voting on a very basic principal that everyone is equal before the law) giving some frail excuses. This despite the party telling people that its assemblymen were humiliated. The recent action of the DAP has proved the party's willingness to put its political ambitions above the welfare of its supporters. It reinforces the party's tie-up with PAS and Semangat 46 just like its lack of action in opposing the implementation of extremist policies on non-Muslims in Kelantan.

Both cases show the DAP's concern for political survival taking priority in safeguarding the welfare and interests of the Chinese community. The DAP, at best, is only a parasite, nibbling at old issues. The Party can do nothing right by sticking to its principles of championing and fighting for the rights and interests of the Chinese. Where is the fight when they are not there, when it matters most?

The success and progress achieved during 1992 should serve to further strengthen the commitment and resolve of the Chinese community in working towards future goals. I am confident the increased unity shown by the community will inspire us to undertake more programmes for the community and Malaysians in general. We are beginning to see greater cohesion amongst the Chinese. Let this cohesion be strengthened in the coming year and the years to come.

Chapter 10

TOWARDS A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

MALAYSIA, in its thirty-seven years of independence, has developed from an agricultural economy into a vibrant and rapidly industrializing nation. Indeed, over the last eight years, our Anniversary Celebrations have always been held in better times than previous ones. Economically, culturally and in all other dimensions of our daily life, we have improved by leaps and bounds. This rapid progress has not been accidental. The MCA is proud that it has worked tirelessly to mobilize the Chinese community to work hand-in-hand with the other Barisan Nasional component parties to bring about socio-political stability and peace, the cornerstones of our rapid economic progress. Our strong points: racial harmony, peace and unity and a strong and committed government, has been further strengthened, thanks to the support the *rakyat* has given to the Barisan Nasional government.

The MCA's role in the mobilization of the Chinese community for the cause of the community and the nation has been significant. From Independence and the Emergency to the difficult period of the NEP and the NECC negotiations, the MCA was there to represent the legitimate rights of the Chinese community. While the DAP ran away from its responsibility at the NECC, the

MCA shouldered on single-handedly and this has resulted in a liberal and progressive NDP to replace the NEP.

Since the mid-1980s, the Barisan Nasional government, under the leadership of Dr Mahathir Mohamed, has implemented bold and visionary policies to make Malaysia a much more competitive nation. This has resulted in significant improvements in all facets of our daily life. Economically, our per capita income has surged from RM4,573 in 1985 to RM8,350 in 1993. Throughout the length and breadth of the nation, we see new factories, office complexes, housing estates and leisure parks, testimony of our improving living standards.

We are also a very vibrant multicultural society. In fact, culturally, the Chinese community in Malaysia has never had it better. We not only practise our culture, but have also benefited from the interaction of the cultures of the various communities. We not only do the lion and dragon dances, some of the MCA divisions also have *Dikir Barat* cultural troupes. We enjoy Chinese cuisine as much as we yearn for *nasi lemak* and *tosai* after a period of absence from Malaysia. We not only enjoy Chinese music, many of our singers like Andre Goh are also renowned singers of Malay songs. In short, the Malaysian Chinese community has not only retained its cultural entity but has further enriched it through its interaction with other cultures.

Our education system is one of the most liberal. Through our schools and tertiary institutions, we have trained the vast majority of Malaysian Chinese youths to be proficient in Mandarin, Bahasa Malaysia and English, and well versed in science and technology. Through TAR College and Kolej Jayadiri, the MCA has worked hand-in-hand with the government to bring about more tertiary education opportunities for our youths. The Barisan Nasional government is not content with these achievements. Our Prime Minister has announced that we will improve and open our education system further, including encouraging foreign universities to set up branch campuses so that Malaysia can become an international centre of education excellence.

After decades of the Cold War, the world is moving into a new era. An era where we see the world getting smaller as a result of advancements in technology and telecommunications, greater cultural adaptation and understanding, and expansion in international trade. These changes are far-reaching in their consequences. To progress further and attain our Vision 2020, it is imperative that Malaysians respond to these changes. Malaysian Chinese, in particular, should respond both as a community, and as Malaysians, to these changes. These global changes bring forth obstacles or opportunities to development, depending of course on how we look at them. We must be alert and responsive to the new opportunities that are being created with the opening-up of the markets in China, Vietnam, Eastern Europe, Latin America, South Pacific and South Africa.

Unless we do so, unless we adopt a global perspective in our business and everyday life dealings, we would not only lose out, but we could be worse off than before because the international community and multinational corporations are keenly eyeing the affluent Malaysian market. They want to increase their exports to our domestic market in direct competition with our domestic firms. Further, they are also actively competing with us for foreign investments.

We must therefore resolve to adopt a new mental approach, a global perspective in which we view the world as our marketplace for new opportunities, challenges and successes. This mental approach requires us to stop comparing our successes or failures with that of our Malay or Indian friends in Malaysia. The new international situation requires us to work in unison with our fellow Malay, Indian, Dayak or Kadazan partners so that Malaysia can play a much more prominent role in the international community.

In the 1960s, 120 million Japanese resolved to "beat with one heart" and they successfully captured the world market. The Koreans and the Taiwanese repeated the same feat in the 1980s. I call upon all Malaysians, particularly the Malaysian Chinese community, to work together, to beat with one heart and think as one mind

so that our products can be features of the international community in the 1990s. We must resolve to enhance our competitive edge and look to the world as our market. And besides national unity, a global perspective also requires that we view things in a constructive and positive way. We must resolve to take advantage of the excellent domestic socio-economic conditions existing now in Malaysia to create new opportunities, to produce goods and services for the world market; we need a mental approach which will not allow us to be distracted or feel disheartened by the constraints and the give-and-take characteristic of a multi-ethnic society. In short, we should change from a zero-sum game approach where "you win, therefore I lose" to a non-zero-sum game mentality where "we all can win".

In this respect, the government has laid out a clear path. Dr Mahathir Mohamad himself has led delegations to China, Latin America, South Africa, Mexico, India and the newly independent Soviet countries to enhance economic ties. Back home, increased priority given to infrastructural development and various tax and financial incentives have made Malaysia an extremely attractive investment centre in this region. The strength of Malaysia in facing up to challenges brought about by global changes, lies in the strength of its peoples. United and together, Malaysians will be better able to meet the challenges facing us and better able to influence the course of international events. Our collective endeavour should be to move Malaysia ahead in the coming years.

Towards this end, we should never stray from our objective of maintaining peace and harmony and political stability in our country. This is the very foundation on which we chart our development. These should always be the foundation we should fight to preserve and enhance at all costs. It is my fervent hope that the Chinese community will always remember this. The MCA's belief had and will always be the same. Racial harmony and political stability are vital factors for the continued progress of the country. Without political stability and racial harmony, we will not be able to achieve the developed nation status which we envisioned. Con-

sistent with this belief, the MCA pledged to work within the Barisan Nasional government to preserve this tenet.

In the 1950s, many had little faith that Malaysia, with its multiracial, multireligious and multicultural populace, could develop itself. Yet after nearly forty years of independence, we have not only developed but risen to become a model of development in a democratic and pluralistic society. It is now the responsibility and the task of all Malaysians to preserve this proud record to ensure Malaysia's further progress, so that we can emerge to be a significant player in the international arena. We not only want Malaysia to be a developed nation by the year 2020, but we also want Malaysia to stand proud, tall and respected by all in the world.

The MCA has grown in maturity over the past four decades. Unity amongst party members has carried the Party through these successful years. Unity has seen the Party's successful participation in the National Economic Consultative Council, achieving its goals as outlined in the National Development Policy. Unity has also enabled us to successfully complete the Tunku Abdul Rahman College Fund Raising Campaign and now the Langkawi Project. Such unity displayed by all members has given the Party leadership renewed confidence to charting further goals for the community and in continuing to represent Chinese interests and aspirations within the context of multiracial Malaysia. With the support of you all, the Party is more than confident of serving the community better in future. We hope to see a better 1994 and beyond, thanks to your combined efforts and tireless groundwork. I hope that the MCA members from all levels will continue with their fine work to further boost the image of the Party. Throughout the year, everyone has demonstrated resolve and commitment in helping the Party in its projects and campaigns. Your continued support will see the Party realize its future goals and objectives. The community, as a whole, should stay united so that the MCA can have a full mandate to represent the needs of the community in the Barisan Nasional government.

Chapter 11

NATURE OF MALAYSIAN CHINESE CULTURE

THESE are exciting times. We in East Asia are experiencing a phenomenal rate of development which is the envy of the rest of the world. Everywhere we see signs of economic progress and prosperity: new roads and highways, new buildings, new factories, new shopping centres, new airports, etc. Business is booming, factories are running on full shifts, unemployment is falling, restaurants are mushrooming and more people are owning houses and cars. Scholars, economists and businessmen worldwide are looking to East Asia for clues, eager to learn what makes this region so vibrant when the West is falling behind. The developed countries, crippled by their worst recession in decades, are struggling with unemployment and falling productivity. Already, this region's gross domestic product has surpassed that of the United States or the European Union and will exceed their combined GDP by the year 2005.

With the opening-up of China in the 1970s, industrialists and entrepreneurs, backed by their governments, have been flocking to the Middle Kingdom, eagerly seeking a piece of the vast Chinese market. Southeast Asia's investment in China is estimated at US\$8

A keynote address delivered at a seminar on Chinese Culture in the 21st Century in August 1994.

billion, while that of Hong Kong totalled US\$40 billion, with more than US\$5 billion from Taiwan.

Malaysians have also become significant players in China and other emerging economies such as Vietnam and Papua New Guinea, thanks to our own rapid economic growth. From a small, insignificant commodity producer, we are fast becoming a respected champion of Third World issues. We have come so far because we have been able to attract foreign investment with our strong, stable government, our comprehensive infrastructure and skilled labour. We have also been able to provide an up-to-date telecommunications system and keep abreast of information technology. These are vital components for a modern economy. Together with other Southeast Asian countries and China, we are now the most dynamic region in the world in terms of trade and investment. Last year, growth in China was in excess of 10 per cent while Malaysia around 8.5 per cent and most of the other East Asian nations between 7 and 8 per cent.

Indeed, we live in exciting times. We also live in changing times. For us who are of Chinese origin, change is, perhaps nothing new, especially for those whose ancestors settled in other lands. As the late Tan Sri Lee Siow Mong wrote in his book, *Spectrum of Chinese Culture*, "It is the nature of culture to undergo changes . . . because it is a living thing. A culture that is capable of changing to fit in with a new environment or absorb what is good or practical in other cultures which it comes into contact with will be the richer for it." Throughout Chinese history, we see evidence of this. For example, much of the spiritual and imaginative part of the Chinese civilization or much of what we think of as typically Chinese originated amongst the proto-Thai peoples of the south, the proto-Tibetan peoples of the west and the proto-Mongolian peoples of the north.

Chinese culture, both material and spiritual, grew rich because the plains of the Yellow River valley became a crossroads used by many people, a centre of commerce and political negotiations and hence, a focus of every kind of custom and point of view. Xian, the

ancient Chinese capital, brought major changes and rich additions to Chinese philosophy, culture and religion as a result of the influence from Europe along the Silk route and Tibet in the south. Similarly, those who left China for other shores, learned to adapt to their new environments and adopted some traits and customs of the locals. To realize how true this is, we merely have to look at just how much the Chinese community in Malaysia has changed over the last century in response to local needs and conditions.

From the way we eat, dress and speak, we have been influenced by the Malays and Indians. The Malaysian Chinese love spicy food, curries and *sambal belachan*. We are most comfortable wearing the *sarung* and eating with our hands. And you should hear the way we speak: our *lahs* and the way we call our loved ones *sayang* and when we visit our parents we say *balik kampung*. The list goes on. When our forefathers first set foot in this country, they spoke only Mandarin or the Chinese dialects, ate only Chinese food, wore the *yi fu* and *cheong sam* and enjoyed listening to Chinese poetry and songs only. The Chinese of today still speak Chinese, eat Chinese food, wear Chinese clothes and appreciate Chinese classical songs. But we are different in that we have gone through a process of cultural evolution; we know what our forefathers knew and more. We do what our forefathers did and more. We also eat Malay, Indian and Western food, wear other clothes and enjoy the music of other communities. The clothes we wear are not confined to the *yi fu* or the *cheong sam* alone. We also wear the western skirt and blouse or the *kebaya*. We do not eat *yong tow foo* or *char kwei teow* alone. We take equal delight in *nasi lemak*, *roti canai*, *capati* or a Western steak.

Such interracial mixing has also become evident in the sports and cultural arena. Sports which were previously stereotyped as being Chinese, such as ping pong and basketball, have seen increasing non-Chinese participation. Similarly, Malay cultural dances like the *Dikir Barat* and the *Boria* are beginning to attract and interest more non-Malays. In fact, amongst the best *Dikir Barat* groups is the one I have seen performed by our Kelantan MCA members.

Lion dance troupes are now attracting more and more non-Chinese members. The *sepak takraw* has attracted non-Malays. The end result of all these developments is, we become more Malaysian. And the closer we are to the creation of a *Bangsa Malaysia*. Yet, without a doubt, we are no less Chinese and have retained all the cultural traits, traits shared by other Chinese communities in this region. Now, the 1993 World Bank Report on why East Asian economies are booming attributed their successes to the people working harder, studying harder and saving harder. These are the qualities the Chinese have long been associated with, the so-called "can do or never say die" spirit.

In 1974, Sir Francis Light described the Chinese as the most valuable part of Penang's inhabitants. He said, "They are the only people from whom a revenue may be raised without expense and extraordinary effort of the government. They are a valuable acquisition." J.D. Vaughn, who spent forty-five years serving in the Straits Settlement at the turn of the century, described the Chinese as "the most active, industrious and persevering of all. They equal or surpass the Europeans in developing the resources of the colony." In general, that is how others see the Chinese and how we see ourselves till this day. But how well the Chinese do, whether we flourish or perish, depends also to a large extent on the reception and tolerance of their host environment.

In China, after years of communism and the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s, the mainland Chinese are finally rediscovering their long unpractised skills in enterprise and capitalism. We who are Chinese but citizens of other nations have been luckier. For decades, we have generally been allowed to do what we do best, namely, helping our adopted country's economy grow.

And in Malaysia, we have been even luckier than most. We not only learn our mother-tongue in schools, practice our culture and have total freedom of religious beliefs, the Malaysian Chinese's way of life have experienced an exhilarating process of flowering in the midst of interaction with the other communities. True, there had been some painful lessons in sharing and accommodating, but

I believe all of us right-thinking Malaysians will agree that our nation has come out the better for it. The last twenty years have seen the various communities in Malaysia communicate more clearly, understand more deeply and in the process grow closer and more secure.

We have such a dynamic and fascinating Malaysian Chinese culture crying out to be studied and understood. And through the years, our culture has evolved into something unique. We haven't had to give up anything, but have taken on new dimensions. Look at our lion dance troupes, for instance. We have become so good at it that we have beaten even China and Taiwan at international competitions. And we have done so because our troupes have been innovative in their dance steps and styles. We could even say that we are setting new standards here.

It is also heartening to note that Chinese primary schools have gained the confidence and interest of not only the Chinese community but also the non-Chinese communities. Even more heartening is the increasing number of non-Chinese children in the schools whose parents obviously see the practical value of being proficient in Mandarin. In 1994, there are a total of 32,000 non-Chinese students in Chinese primary schools, including 27,000 Malay students. This surely augurs well for further interracial and inter-cultural exchanges.

I personally think that the Malaysian Chinese have flourished quite well simply because it has always been in our culture to practise moderation and tolerance. And do not forget a strong characteristic of the Chinese behaviour: humility. It has been said that greatness comes out of humility and not arrogance which is reflected in the Chinese language. The Chinese teach their children to call everyone about the same age or even younger as elder brother or elder sister and everyone about the same age as their parents, aunts or uncles.

The Chinese find nothing more offensive than arrogance or haughtiness since it shows a lack of breeding. This is a very Confucian notion whereby an educated man who wishes to be a truly

well-rounded cultured Chinese, must have knowledge and ability in fifteen items such as the lute or *qin*, calligraphy, painting, martial arts, poetry and medicine or *yi*. As you can see, I certainly cannot call myself a cultured Chinese gentleman since I can't do any of those things except practise medicine and even that I've not done for quite sometime.

Cultured in the very traditional sense I am not, but I do take great pride in knowing and practising other very essentially Chinese qualities and traits. For example, I honour my elders, I believe in treating my fellowman with respect and humility, I eat with chopsticks and I enjoy a fine cup of Tik Kuan Yin tea. All these I learned as a child which have become an integral and unconscious part of my being. I am sure many other Chinese, although lacking a classical Chinese education, practise and hold dear the same qualities and traits. In turn, we try to pass them down to our children.

I know that other communities in Malaysia have similar values and traits. One of the most insulting things you can say to a Malay, for example, is to call him *kurang ajar* which means "badly brought up". What the Chinese would say is *mei jia jiao*. This is because it is ingrained in the East Asians that one must bring honour to the family by one's good behaviour and achievements. Unlike the West, we believe firmly in the sanctity of the family. As Lee Kuan Yew once said, the family is the building brick of society and that in Eastern societies, an individual exists in the context of his family, not separate and pristine as the West is inclined to believe. The family, he added, is part of the extended family, and then friends and the wider society. Even the Chinese language demonstrates how much importance is given to each member of the family with precise words for cousins twice or three times removed, and uncles and aunts on either side of the family. The language also shows the importance of the correlation between the family and the state, where the Chinese term *guo-jia*, meaning country or nation is directly derived from *jia* or family.

In Confucian teaching, if you want to rule the state, first put your house in order. If you want to put your house in order, first cul-

tivate yourself morally. If you want to cultivate yourself morally, first put your heart right. To put your heart right, you must be sincere. What it means therefore is when you are sincere, your heart is right, and your morals are correct. When your morals are correct, your house will be in order. When your house is in order, then you can rule the state. This is something we must not forget in our mad pursuit of wealth and material gain. Put the family first and everything else will fall into place. When the family unit breaks up, there will be chaos and all things will fall apart.

But in the West, especially the United States, it is the self or the individual that comes first. Individual freedom has displaced communal interests and social obligations. And we know that there is something fundamentally wrong with this attitude as borne out by the following alarming statistics. Since 1960, the US population has grown by 41 per cent. In the same period, there has been a 560 per cent increase in violent crimes, 419 per cent increase in illegitimate births, 400 per cent increase in divorce rates and a drop of almost 80 points in the scholastic aptitude test scores. In the blind pursuit of individual freedom and absolute democracy, discipline and tough legislation on criminal punishment have collapsed in America. In Asia, however, governments hold fast to the belief that the tough punishment prevents the recurrence, and the benefit of the doubt is given to the victim, not to the criminal.

Having said that, we cannot feel too smug or superior over the West in decline. Our societies are by no means universally harmonious. We, too, have divorces, teenage pregnancies, juvenile delinquency and other family and social ills. But comparatively, our society remains disciplined and intact and social order prevails. Overall, if Americans were to try to begin learning from Asians, their nation would become a better place.

As Kishore Mahbubani, a senior Singapore diplomat, put it, "The fundamental lessons that Asia can provide to the United States here is that societies can be better off when some boundaries of individual freedom are limited rather than broadened. The resultant increase in social and communal harmony can in turn be

liberating for the individual". In other words, the individual must defer to the greater good of society. This does not mean that the individual is not important in Chinese culture, but the individual stands to gain more when his society is prosperous and well-ordered.

Today, everybody wants to prosper. As Deng Xiaoping declared, "To get rich is glorious". And the East Asians seem to wholeheartedly embrace this view. Even if making money is glorious, we must not let it consume us, so much so that our negative traits emerge. For example, we could become reckless gamblers at the stock market, or live beyond our means, all in the name of saving face or *ai mien zi*. Even our family unit is being threatened. Fewer and fewer of us are living with our parents, and more and more of our children are being brought by childminders and maids, or worse, reduced to latch-key kids. We cannot help but wonder how much of our culture and values are actually being passed on to the next generation. Let me cite some simple examples to illustrate. When we were children, we were taught to greet our elders and visitors automatically. And at the dinner table, we never failed to say *ma, pa, chi fan* and waited till they were seated before we tucked in. Not any more.

With the Western model before us, we should be aware of the dangers that lie ahead. If we are not on our guard, we will lose the very things that set us apart from the West. And that is, our culture which values learning and scholarship, hard work and thrift and the deferment of present enjoyment for future gain. Let us not forget that these are the very factors which have made the Chinese in Southeast Asia and elsewhere what they are today. China's economic successes have understandably stirred in us some ethnic pride and interest in our ancestral culture.

There is also talk of the re-sinicization of Southeast Asian Chinese, a kind of reawakening and the desire to rediscover our roots. There is an element of truth in this because many Malaysian Chinese have taken advantage of the relaxing of restrictions by our government to visit China and look up long-lost relatives in their

ancestral provinces. I did the same. I visited Foochow where my great grandfather came from. It was all very interesting and it satisfied my curiosity about my family history. But that was about all. It was certainly nothing like a homecoming for me. I was simply a tourist and nothing more. I am sure many other Malaysian Chinese who visited China felt the same.

I make this point because with the opening-up of China, the age-old suspicions of the loyalty of Southeast Asian Chinese to their countries of birth are again being raised. Reputable international newsmagazines such as *Time* and *The Economist* talk about the overseas Chinese bonding with the mainland to create a nation without borders, linked by blood. And that the Chinese diaspora is returning home. This is utterly misleading and dangerous. For the vast majority of us, Southeast Asian Chinese, home is where we are born. If we invest in China, it is to make profit, not for sentimental tuggings of the heart or because we want to return to the land of our forefathers. If we learn Mandarin, it is because it is our mother-tongue and not because of any identification with China.

There is nothing wrong if there is a measure of reawakening amongst Southeast Asian Chinese because it is limited to the desire to learn the mother-tongue and their ancestral culture. The more we learn about our past, I believe, the more confident and secure we become of ourselves. And we can then work towards a better future for ourselves. I understand that all over the world, Chinese scholars look to Mainland China as the standard for Chinese culture and literature. Anything less is regarded not worthy of study. But I would strongly urge our own local scholars to reconsider this.

Now is also the time for us to take advantage of the ascent of the East and interest in Chinese culture. For at least half a century, many of our children grew up on a diet of western nursery rhymes, fairy tales and stories. Why can't the *Eight Immortals*, the *Monkey God* and *Na Cha the Dragon Slayer*, the twenty-four stories on filial piety and other Chinese classic fables reach every nook and corner of this world the same way Mickey Mouse has? After all, Mickey

Mouse is a household name simply because of clever marketing and commercialization. So why doesn't some enterprising businessmen commercialize these ancient favourites and make them relevant to today's children? This can take on numerous forms, from soft toys and books to videotapes and wall hangings. Not only can this help propagate Chinese literary fables and characters amongst other communities, but it will also be a fresh approach to presenting and preserving these centuries-old figures amongst the Chinese themselves.

The MCA, in leading the Malaysian Chinese community towards the 21st century, strongly stresses that we should be confident and secure in our roots and our ethnic identification as a Chinese community. While taking steps to preserve and enhance our own cultures, we should also strengthen our bonds with the other communities, working hand-in-hand in the creation of a new Malaysian race which accepts the reality of plural culturalism, yet enhances the inevitable interaction of the various cultures.

Hence, in our Langkawi Project to uplift the standard of the rural schoolchildren, we have constantly stressed the importance of teachers and parents encouraging their children to be more proficient in the three languages: Mandarin, Bahasa Malaysia and English. With trilingualism, we will not only enhance interaction of the various races but also enable our new leaders to play a more important role in the international arena.

In the economics arena, while organizing numerous forums to enhance the marketing and business skills of the Chinese, we are also appealing to them to form more Sino-Malay joint ventures for the domestic and international markets. Our series of cultural festivals held throughout the country have emphasized the theme of interaction and the evolvement of Malaysian Chinese culture in that context. I am glad to say that in each of these festivals we have succeeded in attracting tens of thousands of people. The MCA will forge ahead to emphasize the theme of confidence in ourselves and confidence in interaction. In this respect, our vision is that the Malaysian community, with its multilingual ability, emphasis on hard

work, thrift and dedication, can emerge to be amongst the most progressive society in the world.

I must emphasize that being true to our culture does not mean we have to stick to the old ways. The Confucian concept of a cultured gentleman may no longer be very practical or relevant in today's society. We cannot be so rigid and unwilling to change. After all, there is no escaping modernization. There cannot be one standard yardstick to measure the "Chineseness" of a person, because we have all absorbed many traits and characteristics from other peoples we have come into contact with. But this does not make our Malaysian Chinese culture any poorer or less Chinese. In fact, we are richer for it. So let the Chinese culture continue to accept modern advances and influences because it has and will always be able to retain its own soul.

Chapter 12

A SALUTE TO MOTHERS

AS THE WORDS of the famous song go:

*Where do I begin
To tell the story
of how great a love can be?*

Come May every year, we are all faced with this question. Indeed, how or where does one begin to express his or her love for the woman who has moulded our respective lives and been a perpetual influence on us all? This is something very personal and I believe each of us can never express fully in words, our love for our mothers.

There are also other sayings:

*The hand that rocks the cradle shapes the world.
Behind every successful man, there is a woman.*

Today fittingly, I join you all in saluting our mothers on this Mother's Day.

A keynote address delivered at the launching of MCA's Mother's Day in May 1994.

I want to share with you the lyrics of an ancient Chinese song. The song tells of a story of a young priest who was travelling on a boat with his wife and mother. Half way through the journey, there was a storm and his boat capsized. He was then faced with two choices. Save his mother. Or save his wife? After much thought, he decided to save his mother. He explained later. He only has one mother. He can always marry another wife! I hope none of us will ever have to make this difficult decision at anytime of our lives. I personally would never want to make such a choice, and would do my best to save both equally important women in my life. But the song illustrates the importance of a mother's love back in ancient times. There are many Chinese legends of a mother's love. Meng Moo, the Chinese classic mother, moved her home three times to make sure that her child gets the best opportunity to study. She toiled and sewed late into the night so that her child could have a better future.

The MCA is launching this Mother's Day celebration because despite these legends, we are generally known as a non-expressive race. We do not express our love and gratitude in so many ways and in so many words. Although we regard our mothers as modern-day Meng Moos who will stop at nothing for her children, our mothers go through life without receiving expressions of this love and appreciation and gratitude from their children. It is the aim of this project to inculcate such expressions of love and appreciation for our beloved mothers. Through simple ways such as cooking a meal and doing the housework one day a week or making time to talk with Mum or giving her flowers on special occasions. Through such expressions of love, we are also expressing our Asian value of family traditions and responsibility and filial piety.

We in Malaysia are fortunate that most of us still hold on strongly to the tradition of filial piety and caring for our mothers. It is our responsibility to take care of them, and we take up this responsibility without much fuss and ado. Elsewhere however, we hear about increasing incidence of aged dumping, a practice not uncommon in developed countries. The phenomena is so common

that this phase was coined to describe the practice. Let's hope that back home, we may never adopt this habit as a sacrifice for development. Nothing should be so important as to rob us of our love for our mothers. Few, if any, mothers will think twice about going hungry herself in order to feed her child first.

Each one of us can surely remember occasions when our own mothers personified Meng Moo and made the same sacrifices for us. At our own Langkawi Project Resource Centres launched in the rural areas, we see how mothers walked for miles to accompany their children to such centres, sat outside waiting for them for hours just so that their children could read and improve their knowledge. There is an Indian proverb that says, it is better to educate a mother than a father. For if you educate a mother, she educates her whole family. If you educate a father, you educate one man. That is the close rapport and unselfish love of mothers. Shouldn't we, therefore, reciprocate this love?

The government's efforts to inculcate a spirit of caring for the less fortunate and the aged is a step in the right direction. We in Malaysia do not want economic progress alone. Malaysians cannot be proud of its economic achievements and prowess if we cannot exercise concern for our aged parents. There can be no pride if economic wealth and success come at the same time with increasing number of abandoned old folks living on the streets or uncared for and not loved.

We are reminded every year of Mother's Day by numerous advertisements, contests and competitions in the newspapers. And these competitions draw an overwhelming response from the public. Something that reflects the eagerness of Malaysians in relating and sharing the story of love of their mothers. Try to eat out on Mother's Day without making reservations, and chances are you will end up without a table. I say "syabas" to Malaysians for not forgetting our mothers on this auspicious day. But I want Malaysians to remember our mothers not just on Mother's Day. We must show our love for our mothers everyday. Let us make everyday to be our Mother's Day.

The love for mothers has been imbued amongst ancient Chinese, as evident in the number of songs and teachings of great masters, including Confucius himself. It is an ancient teaching that has been brought forward to this modern day. And let's hope, this teaching will be transmitted to our children and future generations to come and will never be lost through time. On this Mother's Day and every day of the year, let us teach our kids this noble value so that they will appreciate it enough to pass it on to their children.

Chapter 13

THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION

THE MCA SAW excellent results in its efforts to garner funds for the TAR College project in 1992. Through these efforts, we will be able to serve the youths of this country who seek training in the vocational and technical fields. Work on the expansion of the Setapak campus and planning for the two branch campuses have begun and are on schedule. All these programmes, when fully completed in 1995, will mean 16,000 places annually for aspiring Malaysians seeking higher education. It will mean the realization of the dreams of 16,000 young men and women for higher education every year. This is proof of what we all can achieve with commitment and resolve. The success of these programmes will no doubt serve to spur and motivate us in the MCA to work harder for the improvement of the Chinese community and the nation as a whole.

After the successful fund raising campaign for TAR College, we in the MCA have set for ourselves another goal for the new year.

A keynote address delivered at the launching of the MCA Langkawi Project in February 1993. The Langkawi Project was set up by the MCA in February 1993 with a view of upgrading the standard of education amongst the children of the poor, especially those in the rural areas. It is based on a firm commitment to the idea that a good and sound early education is the key to breaking the poverty cycle. The Project places emphasis on both the financial and non-financial aspects in achieving its aims.

Education, as highlighted in the Second Outline Perspective Plan, will be pivotal in plans and programmes to uplift the standard of Malaysians and to alleviate poverty. In other words, we can say that a good education is the key to a better future. The MCA firmly believes in this line of thought. For 1993, the MCA will embark on a project that seeks to improve the standard of education in Chinese primary schools. This year, the Party will undertake a national project to uplift the standard of education in all the Chinese primary schools located in new villages and other less developed areas.

This project will focus on two main areas: mental and physical. On the mental side, we will seek to mould parental perceptions of the importance of a good education for their children; and mobilize the parents so that they will focus their hearts and minds in helping their children to achieve their full potential. On the physical side, we will build or upgrade a Resource Centre in each Chinese primary school and equip these centres with the necessary reading materials as well as other equipment such as manipulative toys, mechanical-electrical tools and computers which are needed for the educational process. In the process of doing this, we want to mobilize the *rakyat*, especially those in the less developed areas, to fully appreciate the importance of education in uplifting the quality of life of the people and to be of one mind and one heart in the pursuit of educational excellence. In the process, we want to further the development of a caring and sharing society where those of us who are better off help to improve the school environment of others who are less fortunate than we are.

Since the establishment of the first Chinese school in the country, Chinese primary schools have come a long way in terms of both the achievements among their students as well as their role within the national education system. These schools have earned their rightful place in the national education system, forming an integral part of this system alongside National Primary Schools and National Type Tamil Primary Schools. But while we are proud of such achievements, we of course acknowledge that there are certain weakness in such schools. Physical resources, especially library

facilities and access to reading materials and reference books and other teaching aids, in most of these new village schools are poor compared to schools in major cities. We cannot afford to turn a blind eye to such weaknesses. If we are to transform Chinese primary schools in the new villages into better learning centres for the future generation, then we must begin to take a serious look at overcoming these weaknesses.

A conducive learning environment determines, to a great extent, the performance of a student. This in turn shapes a parent's confidence and faith in the school and in the education system. Unfortunately, poor conditions in many of the new village schools are not conducive for educational excellence. This has been a discouraging factor for parents wanting to encourage their children to remain in schools.

Many do not see a bright future for their children in these schools. Many parents feel that their children may not be able to make much headway in secondary schools given their poor command of the national language, Bahasa Malaysia. For example, only thirty-nine out of the 364 Chinese primary schools located in new villages managed to attain a 50 per cent passing rate in Bahasa Malaysia (Tulisan) in the UPSR in 1992. Their command of the Chinese and English languages is also inferior compared to students from urban Chinese schools. Many of these students therefore cannot make it to the secondary schools. Their parents thus opt to pull their children out half-way through secondary schools preferring immediate income earning activities; asking their children to work in factories or shops that have flourished during the economic boom.

I do not deny the importance of improving one's family income. But I want to appeal to parents to fully appreciate the value of a good education for the long term benefit and future of their children. I appeal to them to consider the future of their children. By pulling their children from school and sending them to work, we may benefit a little now. But by doing so, their children will always remain mere workers with little chance of upward mobility.

Education encompasses not just the physical aspect of a child's development but also the enrichment of his mental, character-building, and social aspects. It is therefore important that every parent fully understands the concept of a complete education and how to help his or her child achieve educational excellence. We are concerned that every parent understands this, in order that the resource centres that the MCA seeks to provide and upgrade from time to time will be fully utilized by our young. The physical resources must be complemented by the dedication and commitment of parents in wanting the best for their child's education.

The MCA has finalized a ten-point guideline that we believe would be useful to parents to help their children unleash their full potential. The ten-point programme for educational excellence can be summarized as follows:

- (1) Showing more interest in a child's school work. A parent should be encouraged to spend at least half an hour every evening to help their child in his school work.
- (2) Ensuring a conducive and stimulating learning environment at home. It is important that the parent ensures that the child has a quiet and well-lit place equipped with a table and chair where he can spend two to three hours everyday revising his school work.
- (3) Knowing about peer-group pressure. Parents should encourage their child to bring their friends home so that they are aware of the kind of company he is mixing with.
- (4) Encouraging the reading habit. Parents should encourage their child to read the newspapers, magazines and books by setting a target, for example, reading the newspapers everyday, as well as a Bahasa Malaysia and an English book a month.
- (5) Facilitating access to library and reference materials. Parents should set aside an afternoon each week to accompany their child to the public libraries or bookshops where he could browse and pick up new reading materials.

- (6) General moral and logistic support. Details like ensuring a child arrives on time in school and ensuring he gets proper meals and enough rest should not be overlooked. Parents should also ensure the child brings all the books needed for the day.
- (7) Seeking help from friends and relatives. Parents should seek help from neighbours or relatives whose children have gone through the same work on exams. Old examination papers and answers should also be borrowed to help the child in his revision and preparations.
- (8) Concern about general mental development. The parent could plan trips to concerts or exhibitions as a weekly family outing; instead of merely allowing him to watch the television or video.
- (9) Constant interaction with the child's teachers. Parents should meet with their child's teachers at least once a month to keep abreast with his progress in school. Through this, the parent would know of the child's school test and exam schedules and help him accordingly.
- (10) Encouraging the child to take up a healthy sport. Extra-curricular activities and participation in societies would encourage a child to expand his talent and to reduce the chances of him indulging in undesirable activities.

Education should and must be viewed as a long term investment. Therefore, there are no short-term gains. Education is a process that is not left to the school and the teachers alone. Parents have to play a bigger role. A parent's responsibility in providing education to his child should not end with just sending him to school and giving him the finance to purchase books and uniforms and to pay his fees. A genuine desire to know how his child is progressing and giving him the maximum support in ensuring that he continues to progress well is a prerequisite to success. This concern should be extended to the home environment as well. A child can-

not expect to do well in his studies if there is no proper time or space for him to study at home, for example.

Education has always been a subject close to the heart of the Chinese community. The adage that "we may be poor, but our children should not be in want of education" reflects the importance attached to education by the Chinese since the Confucian era. Let us revive this spirit of concern for our young. Let us make sure our young will derive maximum benefits from their education.

Physical facilities, while important and necessary, cannot alone guarantee an improvement in the standard of education. An equally and perhaps more important factor must come from the parent's commitment and attitude in wanting to give their children the best education possible. A parent must no longer be satisfied only with equipping his or her child with the basic skills of reading, writing and counting alone. A parent must no longer view the education process for his or her child as a basic six years. We see in some parents today, especially in the new villages, the preference for present gains. As a result of this thinking, children are often encouraged to help out in the family business as soon as they return home from school. Others pull their children out from secondary schools soon after primary school so that they can help generate some immediate income to supplement the household income.

There is an urgent need to modify this attitude. Parents must realize that the long-term benefits to be derived from a good education are plentiful. Their children can become skilled technicians, engineers, accountants, doctors or corporate leaders. Without education, their children will always remain unskilled workers and will have little opportunity for upward mobility. Short-term gains must be postponed for the long-term good of the children.

The absence of strong role-models is a major problem in these schools. While in urban schools, the standard of a child is often compared to 6As or 4As-2Cs students, in the new village schools, such students are seldom found. In this respect I want TAR College students to organize a programme under which groups of students spend their vacations living and working with the new villag-

ers. During this period, they should work to mobilize the villagers to be of one heart towards achieving educational excellence. They should aim to serve as good role models for the students by assisting them in the learning process. Give these students practical advice such as what books to borrow for reading, how to identify one's weakness in studying, how to prepare for the examination, etc.

Thus far, I have stressed on the importance of the mental changes needed in pursuit of education excellence. We will now talk about the physical side; the second objective of the MCA's project for this year. Physical facilities in schools also form an integral part in improving the standard of education. We believe that by improving the facilities in these schools, especially those in new village schools, we can begin to tackle some of the problems associated with these schools. This long-term ambition will start with the simple step of setting up a comprehensive Resource Centre in each and every Chinese primary school in the new villages and other less developed areas. The Resource Centre can be regarded as the nerve centre of a school in ensuring that students get the necessary basic manipulative tools and toys, reading materials and facilities to expand their cognitive, affective and psychomotor horizons. A well equipped resource centre is therefore an important part of the school. It is a centre which can motivate and expose the students to new ideas, new frontiers and give them a hunger for new knowledge.

This project is estimated to cost about RM15 million. There are about four hundred of such schools, including 364 situated in new villages throughout the country. This works out to an average of about RM37,000 for each of the four hundred schools. This will enable us to equip each school with a sufficient number of books, computers and other materials necessary to build up comprehensive resource centres for these schools. With such facilities, these Resource Centres will help each school encourage its students to read and to do reference work.

We in the MCA are confident that once again, Malaysians will come forward with the same degree of fervour as they did for

the TAR College Trust Fund to see to the success of this project for 1993. The success of this project will mean we will be able to provide a better studying environment for our young from less developed areas. This effort will help bring Chinese primary schools in new villages into the mainstream of educational development in the country and make these schools dynamic centres of education for the rural people.

Besides improving educational facilities, the MCA's project for Chinese primary schools in the new villages will bring the Party much closer to the *rakyat*. This will help us better understand the aspirations and needs of the people, which will in turn enable us to serve the people better. Over the course of the year, we will go round the country and appeal to the generosity of our friends, especially those in the urban areas, to join us in this effort to upgrade Chinese primary schools in new villages. We hope they will respond generously. In the process, let us foster amongst ourselves the spirit of caring and sharing.

In implementing this project, I have no doubt we will be facing certain criticism. Among them will surely be the DAP's attempts to ensure it will not succeed. The DAP will accuse the government of not providing enough money to improve the standard of Chinese schools. The DAP will accuse the government of neglecting the Chinese schools. Before they can have that privilege, let me assure you that the government has been and will be providing all the necessary allocations to Chinese schools for expansion in terms of classrooms, training of teachers and improving the learning environment. All school expansion projects approved under the Sixth Malaysia Plan will be implemented as the normal course of the government's plan to foster the development of all schools including Chinese schools.

Our mission in this project is to focus on the less fortunate Chinese primary schools, to mobilize the parents so that they are of one heart towards educational excellence and to supplement the government's efforts in upgrading the educational resources available at these centres. Further, all donations made towards this no-

ble educational cause will be exempted from tax. We want to further the spirit of caring, the spirit of self reliance in our quest to improve the future of our less fortunate brothers and sisters. Next time the DAP raises a question, ask them what they have done apart from criticizing.

We should never allow ourselves to be confused and distracted by the DAP in this noble cause. These obstacles must not be allowed to dampen our spirit in any way or deter us from achieving what we have set out to do. If we work towards our goals with a full sense of purpose and commitment, there is no stopping us from attaining our goals. I urge the Chinese community to make it their New Year's resolution to work together for the future progress of the community and the country.

The success and progress achieved during 1992 should serve to further strengthen the commitment and resolve of the Chinese community in working towards future goals. I am confident the increased unity shown by the community will inspire us further to undertake more programmes for the community and Malaysians in general. We are beginning to see greater cohesion amongst the Chinese. Let this cohesion be strengthened in the coming years to come.

Chapter 14

EXPANDING THE TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN COLLEGE

I AM VERY HAPPY to be involved in this important milestone in the development of the Tunku Abdul Rahman College. At the outset, I am glad to announce that the Federal Government has written to me stating that it has approved the three major projects of the College under the Sixth Malaysia Plan, namely, the expansion of the present campus in Kuala Lumpur, the establishment of the first branch campus to be located in Segamat, Johor, and the establishment of a second branch campus in Penang. Under the Sixth Malaysia Plan, the Tunku Abdul Rahman College has already been allocated RM20 million by the government for its development programme. Today's official launching of the nationwide fund raising campaign is to raise RM20 million to match the RM20 million already pledged by the government.

We are all aware of the importance of education for our youth, and we will spare no effort to achieve our purpose. The Tunku Ab-

A keynote address delivered at the launching of the National Fund Raising Campaign for the Tunku Abdul Rahman College on March 12, 1992. The TAR College Fund Raising Campaign was launched in February 1992 in an effort to match the RM30 million pledged by the government for the College under the Sixth Malaysia Plan. The Project aims to collect funds to upgrade facilities and expand the College's main campus in Setapak, Kuala Lumpur as well as to build two branch campuses in Johor and Penang.

dul Rahman College, which came into being on February 24, 1969, began as a vision of the MCA. The vision then was to provide opportunities for students who for one reason or another had been deprived of the chance to pursue higher education, as well as to meet the demand for more professional, sub-professional and technical personnel. I am very happy to note that the College has very successfully carried out this objective.

When the College first opened its doors to students with the establishment of the school of pre-university studies, we had an enrolment of 700 students studying in six courses only. Classes were conducted in various borrowed school premises in and around Kuala Lumpur. Subsequently, the School of Business Studies was established in April 1971, followed by the School of Technology, School of Arts and Science and the Extra-mural Studies Department in June 1972. That year also saw the granting of the Instrument of Government to the College by the Minister of Education. This Instrument provides the legal framework for the establishment and administration of the College and remains to this day the basis of a fruitful and mutually beneficial partnership between the government and the MCA.

By 1973, plans were afoot to build the first phase of the College complex at the present campus. The MCA worked very hard to launch a nationwide campaign like this one to raise funds to build the campus. All MCA state liaison committees, divisions, branches, various guilds and associations and philanthropists responded enthusiastically to the campaign. As a result of their support, enthusiasm and hard work, the first phase of the College complex was completed in mid-1976. During the last decade, additional facilities, including a student centre with a games field, two tennis courts and indoor games facilities, two tutorial blocks, a large lecture theatre and workshops were added to meet the demand for more places in the College.

Under the Sixth Malaysia Plan, the government has increased the allocation to Tunku Abdul Rahman College from RM2 million under the Fifth Malaysia Plan to RM20 million under the Sixth

Malaysia Plan. The three major projects will cost a total of RM40 million and will include the construction of additional facilities in the present campus, consisting of lecture halls, tutorial rooms, a library, laboratories and workshops, a hall and a student centre costing RM20 million. Once completed, the main campus will be able to accommodate 12,000 students. RM10 million each will be for the establishment of the branch campuses in Segamat and Penang. Each branch campus will accommodate 2,000 students upon completion.

Tunku Abdul Rahman College has, since 1969, established a reputation as one of the foremost institutions for the training of Malaysian youths in the fields of applied sciences and management, engineering and technology and in finance and business. I am proud to inform you that the College has produced more than 30,000 graduates who now serve the nation in various sectors of the economy. The College now offers twelve diploma courses and twelve certificate courses and pre-university courses.

The College has also established a fine reputation overseas. Diplomas and certificates awarded by the College are recognized and accepted by universities, polytechnics and professional bodies abroad. Many graduates pursuing their studies overseas have been offered advanced entry into various first degree and masters programmes in well-known institutions of higher learning. Our diploma and certificate holders have also been given exemptions from examinations and membership of various professional bodies.

The graduates have also created an impact in the development of Malaysia in that many of them are holding key positions in the organizations they serve. These graduates, who shoulder heavy responsibilities and are highly respected in their organizations, are shining examples for future graduates to emulate. There is no doubt that the Tunku Abdul Rahman College will contribute positively to the government's target of achieving developed nation status by the year 2020 by training the required manpower for the various industries.

Chapter 15

ECONOMIC POLICIES AFTER THE NEP

OVER A PERIOD of twenty years between 1971 and 1990, Malaysia carried out a social and nation building exercise never attempted anywhere else in the world. This exercise was to eradicate poverty irrespective of race, and reduce the identification of race with economic functions. As a result of that policy, the incidence of poverty amongst all the ethnic groups and amongst rural and urban settlers have been reduced dramatically, from 49 per cent in 1971 to only 17 per cent by 1990. Furthermore, while the corporate sector was dominated by foreigners, and to a certain extent by non-Bumiputeras, in 1970, today foreign dominance of the corporate sector has been largely reduced. The corporate sector has become much more multi-ethnic in nature. Malaysians from all ethnic groups are participating at all levels of corporate life. As Malaysians, we have the right to feel proud. We have successfully carried out this transformation and laid the firm foundation for even

A keynote address delivered at a seminar organized by the MCA Economic Bureau in June 1991. The MCA Economic Bureau organizes economic seminars from time to time to explain government economic policies. These seminars are to enable the Party to explain the policies to the people in order that they benefit fully from them. The open dialogue sessions at the seminars also provide a platform for the people to have their queries answered by the Party leaders as well as prominent economic and business personalities.

greater national unity, political stability and socio-economic progress of all our people.

Dr Mahathir Mohamad recently put forward a vision of Malaysia achieving developed nation status by the year 2020. The thrust of this Vision 2020 is a united and economically advanced nation which shares a common destiny. I repeat my call to all Malaysians to fully and wholeheartedly support this aspiration which guarantees a far better future for all Malaysians. Building on the success of the New Economic Policy in which we have so ably created a vibrant and multi-ethnic corporate sector, the Post-1990 Economic Policy will lay down the path upon which all Malaysians can participate actively and propel the nation towards rapid economic take-off in the 1990s in pursuit of this vision.

The essential thrust of the Post-1990 Economic Policy is to maintain and enhance the momentum of growth, that has already been set in place by the liberalization and deregulation process launched since 1986, to make Malaysia the most attractive environment in the Far East for domestic and foreign investment.

Allow me to elaborate this point. We all know that after the nation experienced its most serious post-war recession in 1985, the government liberalized and deregulated its macroeconomic policies, particularly conditions with respect to domestic and foreign investments. As a result, Malaysia has not only fully recovered, but in 1990 achieved a growth rate of 10 per cent, making it the most rapidly growing economy in the world. The government will continue to enhance this growth momentum through further liberalization and deregulation so that we will continue to experience rapid and sustainable growth in the 1990s. This will ensure that the economic cake will be expanding rapidly enough to be shared equitably by all Malaysians, irrespective of creed, religious beliefs and regions in the country.

To achieve this, the government will vigorously promote and assist the private sector to take over parts of the burden of economic development and become the major engine of growth. New and more effective incentives will be accorded to both domestic

and foreign private investors to promote far greater investment. Particular attention will be paid to those in the resource-based and export-oriented industries as well as those in high-tech and high-growth areas. To avoid any feeling of "loss and alienation", all incentives accorded to foreign investors will also to be accorded to domestic investors.

To further reduce the role of the government sector in the economy, the pace of privatisation will be accelerated in the 1990s. The government strongly feels that business should be best left to businessmen. The government has already identified over two hundred projects to be privatised over the next few years. Valued at several billion ringgit, these projects will substantially increase the quantum of corporate wealth in the country, with significant participation by both Bumiputeras and non-Bumiputeras alike. This last point is worth repeating; in the process of privatisation, the government will ensure that all groups, both Bumiputeras and non-Bumiputeras, can have meaningful and fruitful participation to enhance their role in the economy.

The Post-1990 Economic Policy will also give central emphasis to individual enterprise and entrepreneurship, in particular the development of small entrepreneurs. In this respect, the government will undertake all necessary steps to promote the development of small- and medium-sized industries in order to enhance their role in the economic development of the nation. This will be done through the provision of more extensive incentives, financial support and better physical infrastructure. Small- and medium-sized industries are the seedbeds of entrepreneurship. The government is confident that with greater care and assistance, our small- and medium-sized industries will emerge to be a very important component of our vibrant industrial sector, with the fullest possible participation by local small industrialists and entrepreneurs.

Besides emphasizing small- and medium-sized industries, it is also very important that we enhance and upgrade the level of our industrial technology through more intensive application of science and technology. The government will provide a substantial al-

location for research and development activities. I personally feel that by 1995, we should target our research and development expenditure to be at least 1.5 per cent to 2 per cent of our GNP, a nearly two-fold increase from the current 0.8 per cent. It is only with more intensive utilization of science and technology that we can hope to compete with the other more advanced and newly industrializing countries in the world market for manufactured goods. Otherwise, we will forever be known in the world only as a "raw material nation".

I think it is very important to maintain the momentum, and in fact accelerate the rate of growth through the steps outlined above to generate sufficient economic benefits to be shared by all Malaysians without any group feeling any sense of loss or alienation. The government will, of course, continue to work towards eradicating poverty, irrespective of race, religion, sector and region. In fact, having been so successful in eradicating poverty over the past twenty years, I can see that in the Post-1990 Economic Policy, we will focus on specific hardcore groups still living in poverty. Now, our emphasis is to focus on the downtrodden, the most vulnerable groups within our population; those who still live in areas without the basic infrastructure and amenities and without the basis upon which they and their children can be pulled out of the poverty trap. This includes settlers in the remote *kampungs* and estates. We should give more care, more attention, more assistance and more protection to these groups to pull them into the mainstream of development.

However, in the midst of providing care, assistance and protection to the vulnerable groups, the government will also provide an environment conducive to free enterprise and allow individual entrepreneurship to flourish and flower. In other words, the government will provide an environment in which the able and the enterprising, the ones who are willing and able to take risks, are economically rewarded for their endeavours. And at the same time, the government will protect the poor and other vulnerable groups so that they also enjoy the benefits of the nation's growth.

While pursuing this policy of growth with equitable sharing, the government will also strive to look after the social, cultural and educational needs of all the population. It will pursue a policy which, as Dr Mahathir Mohamad says, will create a truly secure Malaysian race in which Malaysians of all origins will be free to practise their religions, customs and beliefs. The government will, therefore, create an environment in which while Malaysians of all origins will be moulded towards a common Malaysian destiny, each is free to promote his culture and practise his religious beliefs, and have more avenues through which his educational needs could be met.

In a nutshell, the Post-1990 Economic Policy will be a policy that promotes growth with equitable sharing, taking into account the needs, aspirations and hopes of all Malaysians. It will promote a caring society where sufficient protection and assistance are provided to the poor and the vulnerable. It will also promote a just and democratic society in which all Malaysians are accorded just rewards for their efforts, and equitable representation and participation in all facets of the nation's social, educational, cultural, political and economic life.

The NEP has created a relatively multiracial corporate sector. But at the same time, we recognize that the past twenty years have also given rise to a situation where the participation of the non-Bumiputeras lags far behind in a number of sectors such as government service, modern agriculture and access to certain areas of education such as residential schools. In the 1990s, the government will strive to redress this imbalance and take specific steps to encourage and promote more non-Bumiputera participation at all levels of government service as well as participation in modern agriculture, including equitable access to land. The government will also take more poor non-Bumiputera students into residential schools to further enhance their learning ability. Furthermore, places in the local universities will be expanded to accommodate more students, particularly in new disciplines much sought after by the nation.

The MCA, on its part, will support the government in the fair and just implementation of the Post-1990 Economic Policy. To assist and ensure its fair implementation, the MCA will also establish a special monitoring subcommittee to which any Malaysian who feels he has been unfairly or unjustly treated, or anyone who feel that there have been deviations in the implementation of this policy can report their cases to. And I can assure you that the MCA Presidential Council at its weekly meetings will address these problems and investigate these complaints. If the need arises, of course, we shall bring it up to the Cabinet. In this way, the MCA can assist the government in ensuring a just and fair implementation of the Policy.

You can rest assured that the MCA will do its best to ensure that the Post-1990 Economic Policy will be implemented in a just and fair manner to all communities. However, we must also recognize the inherent difficulty of any government in governing a multi-racial, multireligious and multicultural society like Malaysia. In such a society, it is impossible for the government to fulfill 100 per cent of every group's wishes and demands. The principle of just and fair accommodation and compromise amongst all races must be regarded as a basic tenet of government, which will ensure that all the regions within the country will continue to progress rapidly and harmoniously, as we have done for the past 33 years.

I sincerely call upon all of you to support the government in its efforts to move the nation forward in the challenging era of the 1990s. This represents the first and the most crucial part of our journey towards Vision 2020. In this respect, we must minimize our differences and emphasize our commonalities as Malaysians. We must join hands with the government to achieve the aims of national unity, national cohesiveness and identity, and growth. At the same time, citizens can also assist us by reporting to us anything they think unfair regarding the implementation of the Post-1990 Economic Policy. With the active involvement of the people, we can together ensure that the Post-1990 Economic Policy will be fairly implemented.

The government realizes that the era of the 1990s will be the era of the Far East. The Far East will be the most rapidly developing region of the world. However, we do not want Malaysia to be "the odd man" out of this rapidly developing region. The Post-1990 Economic Policy will therefore further enhance the growth prospects of the nation by improving its efficiency and further integrating our economy with the Far East and the rest of the world. By the year 2000, we should see Malaysians enjoying a standard of living far better than what we are enjoying now. In the process, we shall be able to better fulfill the expectations and aspirations of all Malaysians.

Chapter 16

TOWARDS GLOBALIZATION

JUST OVER a month ago, Dr Mahathir Mohamad outlined the impressive economic growth record of the country when presenting the Mid-Term Review of the Sixth Malaysia Plan at the Dewan Rakyat. Being Malaysians, we are all naturally proud of such achievements. Indeed, we all have a reason to be pleased with ourselves. The nation's growth was the highest amongst ASEAN and Asian countries, except China.

All this progress means a higher standard of living and better conditions for all Malaysians. This is reflected in the per capita income which increased from about RM6,000 in 1990 to about RM8,000 in 1993. The people also benefited in terms of a lower sales tax on most items, as announced in this year's budget. This means that for the Chinese New Year we can all look forward to cheaper mandarin oranges and other New Year goodies. Even drinkers and smokers have no reason to complain this year, as far as prices are concerned. They too have been spared any increase in taxes.

When the Sixth Malaysia Plan was presented to Parliament in 1991, the growth targets were based on the assumption that the

A keynote address delivered at the seminar on Economic Opportunities in the 1990s: World Outlook in January 1994.

world economy would grow by a moderate 3.3 per cent. However, the world economy grew by 1.4 per cent only. Despite this, the Malaysian economy expanded by an impressive 8.1 per cent between 1991 and 1993, far exceeding the expected 7.5 per cent. This clearly demonstrated the resilience of the economy and the ability of its people to seek new markets despite unfavourable world economic conditions. Malaysia's performance in the export sector, particularly the export of manufactured goods, was even more dramatic. Manufactured goods accounted for 60 per cent of total exports in 1991. This increased to 71 per cent last year, demonstrating the competitiveness of Malaysia's exporting industries.

Although we have succeeded in bringing about peace, harmony and progress, we must never rest on our laurels. If we do, if we relax and be complacent, we will surely move backwards. Nation building, particularly in a multi-ethnic society such as Malaysia, is a difficult process. In this, the MCA together with our Barisan Nasional partners will never relax but will always be in the lead to ensure continued prosperity. We in the MCA have and will continue to play an important part in the country's efforts to build a united, just, progressive, competitive and resilient nation.

I am proud to say that the MCA's achievements and past record has shown us to be a party which has not failed the *rakyat*, particularly the Chinese community, at any time. I want to take this opportunity to express my gratitude and heartfelt thanks to all our MCA state, divisional and branch leaders, members of the MCA, the public and all Malaysians for giving the Party their support every step of the way. This support has motivated the Party to strive even harder for a better tomorrow. It has inspired us to map out even more ideas to build a more united and dynamic Malaysia. I thank all those Malaysians who gave their support and inspiration. Together, hand-in-hand, we can propel Malaysia and the Malaysian Chinese community into even greater heights towards Vision 2020.

The challenge before us today in the 1990s is to sustain the pace of growth we have achieved thus far. In this, Malaysian busi-

nessmen must continue to expand upon the path laid out before them. Malaysian entrepreneurs must continue to open up new markets for our products and services. Although over 71 per cent of our exports are made up of manufactured goods, a large proportion of these are exported through the efforts of multinational corporations. We hope more of our entrepreneurs, particularly those in the small- and medium-sized industries, will make fuller use of the incentives offered by the government so that Malaysian concerns can be just as successful as the multinationals.

Malaysian businessmen must be quick to seize upon opportunities and incentives made available by the government to capture new trade opportunities. The economic performance of the country in future would depend to a large extent on its ability to exploit the opportunities made available with the opening-up of the Eastern European and Asian markets. Malaysia is fortunate in that it is located in the Far East where the rapid expansion of China and the gradual opening-up of Vietnam will offer tremendous new opportunities for Malaysians to seek new markets.

At the same time, we must also accept the fact that the opening-up of Eastern Europe, Cambodia and Vietnam means greater competition in Malaysia's efforts to attract foreign investment. Overcoming this competition means maintaining and building upon the factors which brought us economic progress in the past. Factors such as political stability, racial harmony and a highly skilled, productive and disciplined workforce must be preserved. The enhancement of such factors will make Malaysia a first choice destination for foreign investors.

As we look back at our past record with pride, we also look forward to the future with expectation. A future fraught with challenges that only the strong, the determined and the resolute will be counted. The key word for our businessmen is globalization. To look at the world as a potential market for their goods and services, Malaysia and the Chinese community in particular must learn from the Japanese and the Koreans. In the 1960s, Japan resolved to look out towards the world. They did it with a hundred Japanese

beating with one heart and successfully captured the world market. The Koreans repeated the same feat in the 1980s.

I appeal to the Chinese community and Malaysians in general to follow the example of the Japanese and the Koreans. We must be determined, resolved and united in transforming our excellent internal socio-political conditions, educational and other physical infrastructure and strong government support into products and services that can capture the world market. We must equip ourselves with the latest in technology and expertise so that our quality will be second to none. We must make use of our language proficiency in Bahasa Malaysia, English and Mandarin to integrate into the Far East and the world market so that our products can capture and be permanent features in other societies.

We have in our midst today businessmen who have successfully ventured into the international market, building their business ventures from small concerns that are capable of holding their own in other countries. These businessmen serve as role-models for aspiring young and new entrepreneurs seeking to do the same. For us to progress further as a business community, we must adopt a global perspective in tandem with the growth of the Far East. There is huge potential in this region and elsewhere. The question remains: how well can we tap these markets?