MALAYSIA AT 50 & BEYOND

Edited by Abdul Razak Baginda

Malaysian Strategic Research Centre
Preface
Notes on Contributors
Abbreviations

CHAPTER 1 Environment
Matlin Mokhtar & Goh E

CHAPTER 2 The Agriculture Devel
Experiences and Chal
Fatimah Mohamed Arsh

CHAPTER 3 Tourism and Malaysia
Vikneswaran Nair, Badal

CHAPTER 4 Telecommunication in M
Sureswaran Ramadass, F

CHAPTER 5 Malaysian Media: From
Control
Mustafa K Anuar

CHAPTER 6 Education in Malaysia
Human Capital and N
Siow Heng Loke, Chang L

CHAPTER 7 Sport in Malaysia—Pa
Selina Khoo

CHAPTER 8 Science, Technology &
National Development
Soon Ting Kueh & Quek

CHAPTER 9 Urbanisation and Gro
Norhaslina Hassan

Index
Contents

Preface
Notes on Contributors
Abbreviations

CHAPTER 1 Environment ..................................................... 1
Mazlin Mokhtar & Goh Choo Ta

CHAPTER 2 The Agriculture Development Path in Malaysia:
Experiences and Challenges for the Future ..................... 39
Fatimah Mohamed Arshad

CHAPTER 3 Tourism and Malaysia ....................................... 101
Vikneswaran Nair, Badmadin Mohanad & Arman Hamzah

CHAPTER 4 Telecommunication in Malaysia .......................... 133
Sureswaran Ramadass, Rahmat Budiarto & Azlan Osman

CHAPTER 5 Malaysian Media: From British Rule to Indigenous
Control ................................................................. 165
Mustafa K Anuar

CHAPTER 6 Education in Malaysia: Development of
Human Capital and National Unity .................................... 209
Siow Heng Loke, Chang Lee Hoon & Norani Mohd. Salleh

CHAPTER 7 Sport in Malaysia—Past, Present and Future ........... 241
Selina Khoo

CHAPTER 8 Science, Technology and Innovation for
National Development: The Way Forward ....................... 271
Soon Ting Kueh & Quek Ai Hwa

CHAPTER 9 Urbanisation and Growth of Cities in Malaysia ...... 307
Norhaslina Hassan

Index ................................................................................. 353
CHAPTER NINE

Urbanisation and Growth of Cities in Malaysia
Norhaslina Hassan

Introduction
MALAYSIA HAS NOW MORE THAN 50 years of experience in urbanisation. The country was about 30% urbanised in 1960, 40% in 1980 and 60% in 2000. By the year 2020, the majority (over 70%) of the nation’s total population is projected to live in cities. Urbanisation in Malaysia has been most spectacular since 1970. It took the country 50 years to double its urbanisation rate from 14% to 29% prior to 1970 but only 30 years to double that figure again to 62%. Certainly, the urban agenda in Malaysia will be more significant as urban issues affect an increasingly larger proportion of society. What is also important to recognise is that urban analyses involve a complex interrelationship of economic, social, cultural, physical and environmental aspects and hence, the need for a contribution of knowledge from various fields to better understand city dynamics (see Pinson, 2004).

Urbanisation is widely accepted as part of the development process. Arguably however, are the positive and negative consequences of that process where much literature has focused on the latter in many developing countries. Diffusion of urbanisation in Malaysia has contributed to the general improvements of the living environment through the provision of infrastructure and services such as conventional housing, water and electricity supplies, sanitation, sewerage, transport and telecommunications and so forth. Urbanisation creates more employ-
Malaysia turned fifty in 2007. While many former colonies have experienced severe political upheavals since gaining independence, Malaysia stands out as being one of the very few that have survived and developed into a stable political and economic nation state.

Despite such an achievement, Malaysia is today faced with challenges brought on by its very own success – an increasingly educated population, a sizeable middle class, a generally much more aware public, with a greater access to the internet world, thereby providing them with myriad viewpoints and perspectives. All these are today part of the country's landscape, which is predicated on a globalised arena.

This book is an attempt to examine various aspects of the country's social life, within the context of the country's fifty years of independence. From the environment, tourism, telecommunications and media to education, sports and science and technology, it is hoped that this book will provide a better understanding and appreciation of Malaysia's development.

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