CHAPTER EIGHT

Science, Technology, the Economy, Sustainable Development and Religion: Strange Bedfellows or a New Coalition?

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Introduction

Malaysia's economic, scientific and technological developments since independence have largely been growth oriented and market driven. Like most developing postcolonial states, Malaysia has chosen to embrace 'developmentalism' as a means of 'catching up', aspiring to become a modern industrial nation by 2020. Although Malaysia has succeeded in transforming itself from an agriculturally-based economy to an industrially-based economy, it has over the decades had to contend with both political and economic crises, besides having its fair share of environmental problems. Malaysia's science and technology development, which is an integral part of its economic development, and likewise state-driven, has also chalked up a number of successes, measured in terms of institutional developments and standard science and technology indicators. Developments in the economy, science and technology, and the concomitant rise of environmental problems, have led to calls for a fundamental rethinking about the way economic development and the environment are approached. In line with developments elsewhere, there seems to have been an increasing awareness of the environment, and an appeal for sustainable development, a concept which was popularised by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), better known as the Brundtland Commission of