

MALAYSIA ON COURSE TO BECOME A DEVELOPED COUNTRY: PRIORITIZING ISSUES WITH THE ANALYTIC HIERARCHY PROCESS

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ABSTRACT

By the year 2020, Malaysia aspires to become a fully developed nation. This lofty vision, known as Vision 2020, was unveiled by the former Prime Minister of Malaysia Tun Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad on February 28, 1991. Currently, it is generally felt that the nation has achieved 50 to 60 percent of the objectives of Vision 2020. What needs to be done to achieve the vision and in what areas? These are the questions that we asked to 759 people living in Malaysia (Malaysians as well as Internationals) in a nationwide survey. As expected, the respondents touched upon a wide variety of issues pertaining to education, economy, technology, quality of life, law and order, R&D, and so on. Upon compilation of all the articulated issues, an affinity diagram was developed. Subsequently, the Analytic Hierarchy Process has been applied in each component of the affinity diagram. This application identifies the main issues that need to be addressed in order to realize the objectives of Vision 2020. The present research findings are expected to provide useful guidelines to the policy makers at the national level in the course of fine tuning Vision 2020 strategies.

Keywords: developed country, Vision 2020, affinity diagram, Analytic Hierarchy Process, Malaysia

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1. Introduction

Vision is a long-term objective that provides an insight into the future direction in which a nation/organization needs to move, just as an identified destination gives a direction to a journey. A well-defined vision provides focus and direction to the formulation of current programs, which in turn, links current actions to the achievement of future goals. Malaysian Vision 2020 was unveiled 28 February 1991 by former Prime Minister of Malaysia Tun Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad at the inaugural meeting of the Malaysian Business Council. The gist of this vision is to develop Malaysia as a fully developed country². The Vision 2020 statement is (Rahman, 1993):

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

In the first open National Seminar on Vision 2020 (V-2020) in 1991, then-Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia Tun Abdul Ghafar Baba stressed Malaysia should not only be developed economically, but also in all dimensions including political, social, spiritual, psychological as well as cultural. More importantly, in the efforts towards a developed status, Malaysia should also endeavor to create a united, confident, socially just and politically stable society, in which everybody has a place, and takes pride in being a

² The term developed country is used to categorize countries with developed economies in which the tertiary and quaternary sectors of industry dominate. This level of economic development usually translates into a high per capita income and a high Human Development Index. World Bank defines high income countries as countries with per capita GNP of \$10,000 or more. Traditionally, Canada and the United States in North America, Japan in Asia, Australia and New Zealand in Oceania, and most countries in Northern Europe and Western Europe have been considered as developed countries. Despite their high per capita GNP, the GCC countries in the Middle East are generally not considered developed countries because their economies depend overwhelmingly on oil production and export.

Generally speaking, a nation is said to be developed if it has well-developed political, economic, physical, educational and infrastructural institutions in place and every citizen, irrespective of his/her class, sex, or birth enjoys the confidence to live his/her life by choice and not by imposition from any sector, provided such liberty is within the accepted moral norms of the society, without fear or inhibition of any kind or from any quarter. Developed countries have low level of illiteracy, poverty, infrastructural deficiencies, social imbalances, bureaucratic and political bottlenecks, etc and work in cohesion and unison in one voice and dictum and achieves as a result, the highest in the fields of science, and discoveries, at any given point of time and leads the field with highly developed systems in the area of law, justice and social retribution.

Malaysian³. In short, V-2020 reflects the vision of a fully developed and industrialized Malaysia in all dimensions by the year 2020. Tun Mahathir Mohamad stated this as follows (Mohamad, 1991):

Malaysia should not be developed only in the economic sense. It must be a nation that is fully developed along all the dimensions: economically, politically, socially, spiritually, psychologically and culturally. We must be fully developed in terms of national unity and social cohesion, in terms of our economy, in terms of social justice, political stability, system of government, quality of life, social and spiritual values, national pride and confidence.

Specific objectives of V-2020 are:

- To have sufficient food and shelter with easy access to health and basic essentials
- To eradicate poverty
- To remove the identification of race with major economic functions and to have a fair distribution with regard to the control, management and ownership of the modern economy
- To maintain annual population growth rate of 2.5%
- To double real GDP every ten years between 1990 and 2020
- To have a balanced growth in all sectors, namely: industry, agroforestry, energy, transport, tourism and communications, and banking, that is technologically proficient, fully able to adapt, innovative, with a view to always moving to higher levels of technology

It is clear that the focus of V-2020 is not only on the economic aspects of development, but also on the interrelated aspects such as social justice, quality of life, moral and ethical values, work ethics and so on (Kassim, 1993). To achieve the various objectives of V-2020, the former PM identified nine challenges that, if successfully addressed, will enable Malaysia to realize V-2020. These challenges are supported and promulgated by other Malaysians, including various ministers. Here are those nine challenges:

1. Establishing a united Malaysian nation
2. Creating a psychologically liberated, secure, and developed Malaysian society
3. Developing a mature democratic community
4. Forming a community that has high morale, ethics, and religious strength
5. Establishing a mature, liberal and tolerant society
6. Establishing a scientific and progressive society
7. Establishing a fully caring society
8. Ensuring an economically just society
9. Establishing a prosperous society.

³ Speech delivered by Tun Abdul Ghafar Baba at the opening ceremony of National Seminar Towards a Developed and Industrialized Society: Understanding of the Concepts, Implications and Challenges of Vision 2020, Kuala Lumpur, 5-7 December, 1991.

Mohamad (1991) said: There can be no fully developed Malaysia until we have finally overcome the nine central strategic challenges that have confronted us from the moment of our birth as an independent nation.

V-2020 is a buzz word in Malaysia, and the government is keen to achieve this lofty vision. However, when we talk to the public about this, they are, in general, of the opinion that many more things need to be done before the nation achieves V-2020. A formal questionnaire was developed to assess the present level of achievement. The details are provided in the following sections.

2. Public Opinion on Realization of V-2020

We contacted 759 people in Malaysia to respond to the questionnaires. All the respondents were contacted personally by the researchers and the appointed research assistants (RAs). Because the survey is on the national vision, the RAs visited all the states of Malaysia and contacted the respondents personally. Although few individuals refused (according to the RAs and also the researchers' own experience) to fill out the questionnaires, overall, a high majority of the respondents cooperated with the RAs and filled out the questionnaires.

The questionnaires had three sections of which the first one was intended to obtain the respondents' demographical information (see Table 1). In the second section, the respondents were asked to provide their opinion on a number of issues of V-2020. In the third and final section, the respondents were invited to provide suggestions to the Malaysian government as well as the common populace. The content of this paper is largely based upon the information obtained in the third section.

Table 1
Respondents' demographic information

Variable*	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
• Male	417	54.9
• Female	342	45.1
Race		
• Malay	510	67.2
• Chinese	82	10.8
• Indian	61	8.0
• Others	106	14.0
Age group		
• 20 years or below	23	3.0
• 21-30 years	375	49.4
• 31-40 years	204	26.9
• 41-50 years	99	13.0
• Above 50 years	57	7.5
Highest level of education		
• O Level	28	3.7
• A Level	17	2.2
• Diploma	100	13.2

• Professional	38	5.0
• Bachelors	353	46.5
• Masters	120	15.8
• Ph.D.	59	7.8
• Others	41	5.4
Marital status		
• Single	357	47.0
• Married	395	52.0
• Divorced	4	0.5
Type of employment		
• Public	269	35.4
• Private	289	38.1
• Self-employed	61	8.0
• Others	133	17.5

* Missing entries are not considered in the table.

Malaysia is a multi-religious, multi-racial and multi-lingual country. In addition, the country's population consists of a sizable percentage of foreigners who belong to mainly three categories: students, professionals, and workers. We were also interested to know their views on the nation's aspiration to become developed and how far the country has progressed. However, we considered only the professionals from among the foreigners for obtaining the feedback in this questionnaire. The statistics of the respondents across various states of Malaysia and the world are provided in Table 2. It is to be noted that out of 759 respondents, 106 are foreigners belonging to 28 countries (the list of countries are arranged alphabetically starting and ending with Afghanistan and Zimbabwe, respectively)⁴.

Table 2
Origin of the respondents

Malaysian		International			
State	No. of respondents	Country	No. of respondents	Country	No. of respondents
Johor	44	Afghanistan	1	Oman	1
Kedah	51	Albania	1	Pakistan	6
Kelantan	71	Algeria	3	Saudi Arabia	6
Kuala Lumpur	69	Bangladesh	15	Senegal	1
Malaka	39	China	2	Singapore	1
Pahang	18	Egypt	2	Somalia	1
Penang	15	Ghana	1	Sri Lanka	1
Perak	70	India	6	Sudan	1
Perlis	2	Indonesia	14	Tanzania	1
Sabah	8	Iran	2	Tunisia	1
Sarawak	41	Kenya	1	Turkey	1
Selangor	159	Malawi	1	Uganda	2
Negeri Sembilan	41	Maldives	2	Yemen	1
Terengganu	20	Nigeria	2	Zimbabwe	1

⁴ Not all the respondents mentioned their state or nationality in the questionnaire.

The number and percentages of the respondents who provided feedback from various states in Malaysia are also shown in a pie chart (see 1). As it is shown, the highest number of respondents are from the state of Selangor, (the most developed state in Malaysia (New Straits Times 2009), followed by Kelantan, Perak and Kuala Lumpur (a federal territory).

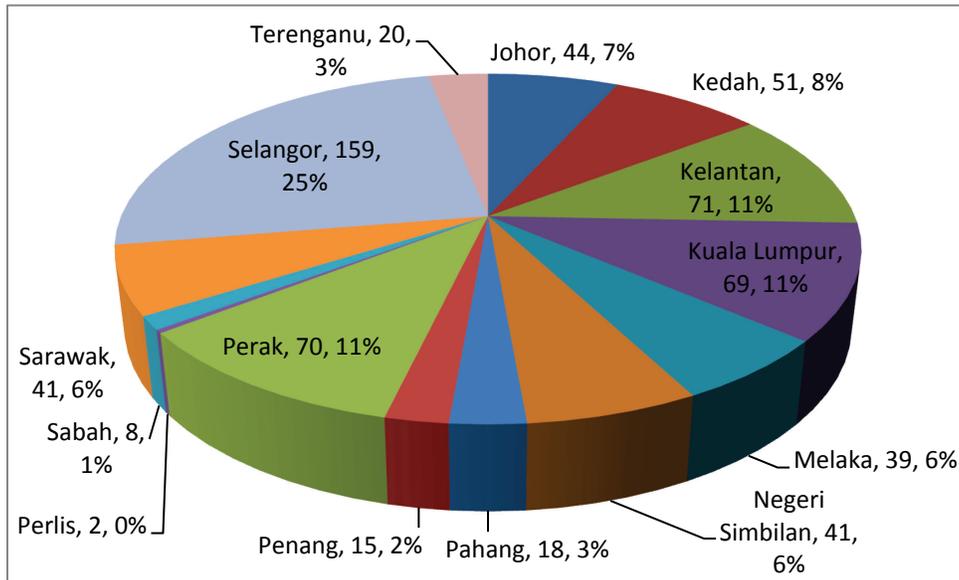


Figure 1 Responses received from the various states of Malaysia.

After obtaining the demographic information, the respondents were asked seven yes/no questions. The frequency distribution of the responses is provided in Table 3. A number of observations can be made from these responses. More than 50% of the respondents said either “No” or “Not sure” whether Malaysia can achieve the status of developed nation by 2020. However, proportional hypothesis test does not confirm that the minority said “Yes” ($p = 0.1583$). Therefore, the responses on the question are evenly distributed between “Yes” and “No” and “Not sure.”

Table 3
Analysis of people's responses against Yes/No type of questions

Question	Yes	No	Not Sure
Do you think that Malaysia can achieve the status of developed nation by 2020?	366 (48.2)	118 (15.5)	262 (34.5)
Do you think that the initiatives from the government to achieve the status of developed nation are enough?	190 (25.0)	315 (41.5)	239 (31.5)
Do you think that the initiatives from the government to achieve the status of developed nation are working properly?	252 (33.2)	238 (31.4)	255 (33.6)
Is the cooperation of the people with the government to achieve developed nation sufficient?	198 (26.1)	342 (45.1)	205 (27.0)
Do you think that the present education system in Malaysia is able to prepare the nation to be developed by 2020?	219 (28.9)	369 (48.6)	158 (20.8)
Is the human resource skilled enough and ready to take challenges to achieve the targets of a developed nation by 2020?	153 (20.2)	407 (53.6)	187 (24.6)
Are the monitoring agencies active enough to monitor the progress pertaining to all the challenges of vision 2020?	135 (17.8)	313 (41.2)	297 (39.1)

In the remaining six questions, the majority of the respondents answered in the negative. In particular, the respondents *do not* think that:

- The initiatives taken by the government to achieve the status of a developed nation are enough.
- The initiatives taken by the government to achieve the status are working properly.
- The cooperation of the people with the government to achieve developed nation is sufficient.
- The present education system in Malaysia is able to prepare the nation to be developed by 2020.
- The human resource is skilled enough and ready to take challenges to achieve the targets of a developed nation by 2020.
- The monitoring agencies are active enough to monitor the progress pertaining to all the challenges of vision 2020.

The high percentages of responses under the column "Not sure" are noteworthy. About 39% (highest percentage under "Not sure" category) of the respondents are not aware about the existence of any agencies that monitor the progress of achieving the status. We

also find that 53.6% (overall highest percentage) of the respondents do not think that the country's human resource is skilled enough and ready to take up the challenges of V-2020.

3. Suggestions for Achieving V-2020

The main purpose of the questionnaire survey was to gather the public suggestions to expedite the process of achieving the developed status. As it was anticipated, the respondents touched upon a variety of issues, and initially, the suggestions were unstructured. People were vocal about government responsibility, equitable distribution of wealth, preventing corruption and, the ubiquitous issue of economy. Altogether 423 suggestions (some of these are mere comments) were received of which many are repeated a large number of times. For example, numerous people voiced out “develop human capital,” “fair and equitable distribution of wealth,” “eliminate corruption,” etc.

All the suggestions provided by the respondents are classified by the researchers into 22 categories (see Appendix). The categorization process started with the identification of the suggestions that have “affinity” among them and pertain to a central theme. For example, the common theme of the suggestions ‘Ensure that the programs offered in the public and private universities are in the line with market need’ and ‘Education should not be only examination oriented’ is “Education”. So, these two suggestions were placed under Education category. Following this approach, the affinity diagram was developed. Thirteen of 22 categories possess a number of distinct items. An affinity diagram has been created for these 13 categories (Exhibit 1). However, Islam (2005) comments that mere construction of an affinity diagram is not sufficient; rather, one needs to prioritize the items within the components of the diagram in order to know which items deserve more attention.

The distinct items are singled out by the researchers and used for prioritization by the AHP. For example, the two distinct items under “Freedom of Expression” are “Press freedom” and “Public freedom of expression.” Similarly, under “Human Capital development”, the following items can be considered as distinct:

- Develop more skilled workforce
- Develop right attitude among citizens
- Develop a morally upright society
- Malaysians should seek more knowledge and education
- People should possess more positive values such as punctuality, discipline, and commitment
- Open Malaysian mind to accept others' ideas and thinking

In fact, to frame a distinct item, few similar items have been combined. This process does not only reduce the number of items but also makes it amenable to the application of AHP (Saaty, 2005). For example, under the category of “Social Life,” the suggestion,

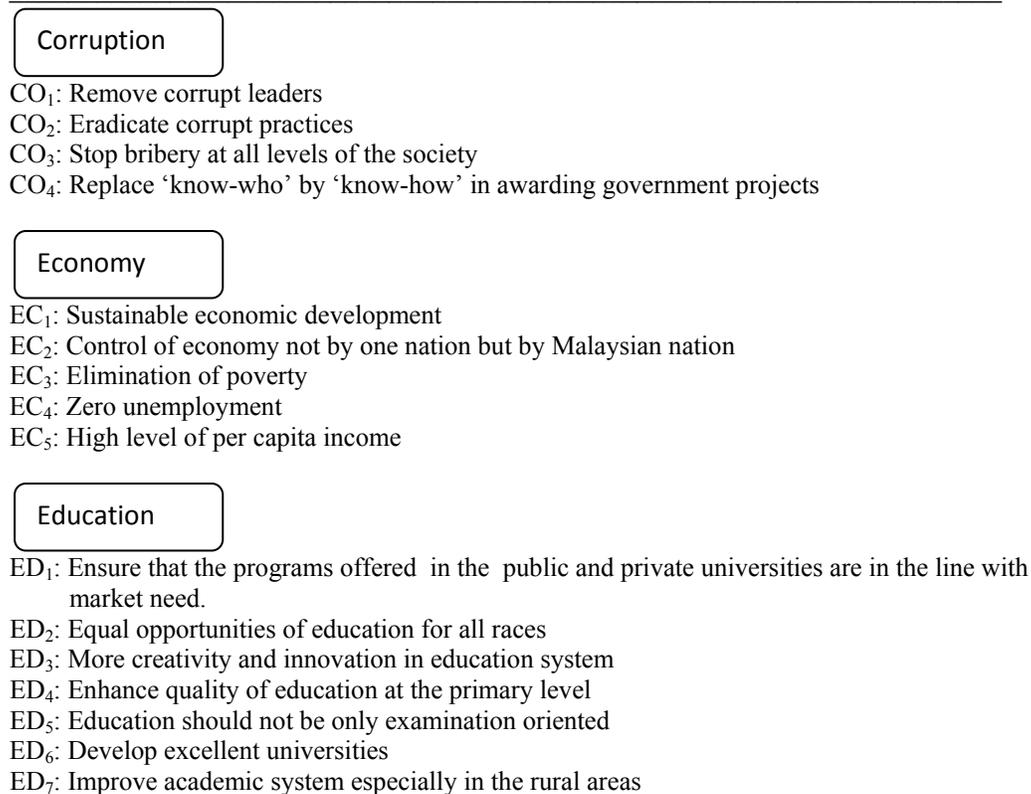
“Inculcate sharing and caring culture in the society” is actually an integrated form of the following suggestions:

- Culture of caring for each other and respecting others’ opinions.
- As a Malaysian, (I) think it does not matter if we achieve a developed nation status successfully by 2020 unless we realize that the norm values among Malaysians, namely understanding and helping each other are more important in order to maintain and remain prosperous in the country for ever.
- More caring, giving and taking.
- Malaysian should make their heart as nice as good hearted people.
- Everybody should support whatever has been done by Malaysia and think positive for every development.

Nevertheless, there are items under a specific theme that may appear to overlap one another, e.g., “Eradicate corrupt practices” and “Stop bribery at all levels of the society.” One may view that stopping bribery is a part eradicating corrupt practices, however, “Stop bribery at all levels of the society” has been taken separately because of its stand-alone nature among all corrupt practices and observed high frequency among all the responses.

Exhibit 1

The affinity diagram of V-2020



Environment

- EN₁: Zero pollution
- EN₂: Development without destroying the environment

Freedom of Expression

- FE₁: Press freedom
- FE₂: Public freedom of expression

Government Responsibility

- GO₁: Strong government with integrity and good governance
- GO₂: Transparent government
- GO₃: Close cooperation between private and public sectors
- GO₄: Avoid bureaucracy
- GO₅: Appoint a monitoring agency to oversee meeting challenges of Vision 2020
- GO₆: Elect morally upright leaders in the government
- GO₇: Change the mindset of politicians
- GO₈: Full democracy

Human Capital Development

- HC₁: Develop more skilled workforce
- HC₂: Develop right attitude among citizens
- HC₃: Develop a morally upright society
- HC₄: Malaysians should seek more knowledge and education
- HC₅: People should possess more positive values such as punctuality, discipline, and commitment
- HC₆: Open Malaysian mind to accept others' ideas and thinking

Quality of Life

- QL₁: Develop rural areas
- QL₂: Improve public transportation including road infrastructure
- QL₃: Improve public health-care facilities
- QL₄: Improve telecommunication system

R&D

- RD₁: R&D in critical sectors in agriculture and industry
- RD₂: Invite more scholars (from overseas) to contribute in R&D
- RD₃: Recognize and encourage research in universities
- RD₄: Provide enough funds for R&D in technological areas and new product development

Social Life

- SL₁: Crime prevention
- SL₂: Educate citizens to be more civic-conscious
- SL₃: Inculcate sharing and caring culture in the society
- SL₄: More freedom and no racism

Technology

- TE₁: Develop knowledge-based society
- TE₂: Strong support for scientific development
- TE₃: Import expertise and technology from abroad
- TE₄: Achieve technology mastery

Unbiased Practice

- UP₁: Punishment for wrong doers regardless of their political or racial affiliation
- UP₂: Involvement of all races in governmental decision making bodies
- UP₃: Ensure all ethnic groups are equally treated
- UP₄: Mutual help and cooperation among all Malaysians; no discrimination on the basis of race or religion

Unity

- UN₁: Politicians should refrain from making ethnically discriminatory remarks
- UN₂: Enhance national unity by eliminating ethnic discrimination
- UN₃: Improve racial understanding and tolerance

The AHP prioritization process is applied in each category of the affinity diagram with the help of five experts (two academicians, two civil servants and one businessman). The geometric mean aggregated prioritization matrices are shown in Exhibit 2. The numbers are maintained in the range (1/9, 9) by considering the nearest approximation of the respective geometric means. The priorities of the items under each category are shown in Table 5.

Exhibit 2

A sample of completed AHP pairwise comparison matrices

	CO ₁	CO ₂	CO ₃	CO ₄
CO ₁	1	4	5	7
CO ₂		1	4	3
CO ₃			1	4
CO ₄				1

	EC ₁	EC ₂	EC ₃	EC ₄	EC ₅
EC ₁	1	5	1/4	1	1/2
EC ₂		1	1/6	1/5	1/3
EC ₃			1	3	4
EC ₄				1	3
EC ₅					1

	ED ₁	ED ₂	ED ₃	ED ₄	ED ₅	ED ₆	ED ₇
ED ₁	1	3	4	3	5	1	3
ED ₂		1	1/2	1/3	1	1/4	1/2
ED ₃			1	1/2	5	1/3	1
ED ₄				1	3	1	1
ED ₅					1	1/5	1/4
ED ₆						1	2
ED ₇							1

	EN ₁	EN ₂
EN ₁	1	1/4
EN ₂		1

	FE ₁	FE ₂
FE ₁	1	3
FE ₂		1

	GR ₁	GR ₂	GR ₃	GR ₄	GR ₅	GR ₆	GR ₇	GR ₈
GR ₁	1	5	4	5	7	1/3	2	2
GR ₂		1	1/3	3	1	1/5	1/2	1/2
GR ₃			1	3	3	1/4	3	2
GR ₄				1	1/3	1/7	1/2	1
GR ₅					1	1/7	1/2	1
GR ₆						1	5	5
GR ₇							1	1/2
GR ₈								1

	HC ₁	HC ₂	HC ₃	HC ₄	HC ₅	HC ₆
HC ₁	1	1/5	1/5	3	1/4	2
HC ₂		1	1	5	1	5
HC ₃			1	5	2	5
HC ₄				1	1/4	2
HC ₅					1	5
HC ₆						1

	QL ₁	QL ₂	QL ₃	QL ₄
QL ₁	1	2	2	2
QL ₂		1	1/2	3
QL ₃			1	3
QL ₄				1

	RD ₁	RD ₂	RD ₃	RD ₄
RD ₁	1	4	3	3
RD ₂		1	1/3	1/3
RD ₃			1	3
RD ₄				1

	SL ₁	SL ₂	SL ₃	SL ₄
SL ₁	1	7	8	9
SL ₂		1	1/3	2
SL ₃			1	3
SL ₄				1

	TE ₁	TE ₂	TE ₃	TE ₄
TE ₁	1	3	4	1
TE ₂		1	3	1
TE ₃			1	1/4
TE ₄				1

	UP ₁	UP ₂	UP ₃	UP ₄
UP ₁	1	1/3	1/4	1
UP ₂		1	1/3	1/2
UP ₃			1	5
UP ₄				1

	UN ₁	UN ₂	UN ₃
UN ₁	1	1	2
UN ₂		1	4
UN ₃			1

Table 5
Priorities of the items in each category of the affinity diagram

Category	Items	Priorities	Consistency Ratio	Category	Items	Priorities	Consistency Ratio
Corruption	CO ₁	0.583	0.14	Economy	EC ₁	0.142	0.08
	CO ₂	0.238			EC ₂	0.044	
	CO ₃	0.121			EC ₃	0.463	
	CO ₄	0.057			EC ₄	0.213	
			EC ₅		0.138		

Education	ED ₁	0.294	0.04	Government Responsibility	GR ₁	0.224	0.07
	ED ₂	0.057			GR ₂	0.052	
	ED ₃	0.106			GR ₃	0.123	
	ED ₄	0.152			GR ₄	0.037	
	ED ₅	0.042			GR ₅	0.052	
	ED ₆	0.229			GR ₆	0.364	
	ED ₇	0.120			GR ₇	0.072	
				GR ₈	0.076		
Environment	EN ₁	0.200	0.00	Freedom of Expression	FE ₁	0.750	0.00
	EN ₂	0.800			FE ₂	0.250	
Human Capital Develop- ment	HC ₁	0.082	0.04	Quality of Life	QL ₁	0.383	0.08
	HC ₂	0.276			QL ₂	0.210	
	HC ₃	0.313			QL ₃	0.295	
	HC ₄	0.055			QL ₄	0.112	
	HC ₅	0.229					
	HC ₆	0.044					
R&D	RD ₁	0.494	0.09	Social Life	SL ₁	0.713	0.09
	RD ₂	0.082			SL ₂	0.059	
	RD ₃	0.270			SL ₃	0.152	
	RD ₄	0.154			SL ₄	0.076	
Technology	TE ₁	0.405	0.05	Unbiased Practice	UP ₁	0.109	0.13
	TE ₂	0.216			UP ₂	0.177	
	TE ₃	0.079			UP ₃	0.543	
	TE ₄	0.300			UP ₄	0.171	
Unity	UN ₁	0.376	0.05				
	UN ₂	0.474					
	UN ₃	0.149					

From the prioritization exercise, we identify the most important suggestions (selected only the first and second rank holders) under each category and these are shown below:

- Remove corrupt leaders (CO₁)
- Eradicate corrupt practices (CO₂)
- Eliminate poverty (EC₃)
- Zero unemployment (EC₄)
- Ensure that the programs offered in the public and private universities are in the line with market need (ED₁)
- Develop excellent universities (ED₆)
- Develop without destroying the environment (EN₂)
- Press freedom (FE₁)
- Elect morally upright leaders in the government (GR₆)
- Strong government with integrity and good governance (GR₁)
- Develop morally upright society (HC₃)
- Develop right attitude among citizens (HC₂)
- Develop rural areas (QL₁)
- Improve public health-care facilities (QL₃)
- R&D in critical sectors in agriculture and industry (RD₁)

- Recognize and encourage research in universities (RD3)
- Crime prevention (SL1)
- Develop knowledge-based society (TE1)
- Achieve technology mastery (TE4)
- Ensure that all ethnic groups are equally treated (UP3)
- Enhance national unity by eliminating discrimination (UN2)

Expounding on the details of all of the above suggestions is beyond the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, brief accounts of some of these are provided below.

Elimination of Corruption

Through empirical investigation, Strauss (2001) finds that corruption affects growth and government efficiency in developing countries. Mauro (1995) also found corruption as a robust negative determinant of investment, which in turn has negative implication for the rate of growth in the economy.

Since 1995, Transparency International has been publishing an annual Corruption Perception Index (CPI) that ranks the countries of the world according to the degree to which corruption is perceived to exist among public officials and politicians. The organization defines corruption as “the abuse of entrusted power for private gain.” However, what is legally defined to be corruption differs between jurisdictions: a political donation may be legal in some jurisdiction but illegal in another; a matter viewed as acceptable tipping in one country may be construed as bribery in another. The 2008 Transparency International poll covered more than 180 countries. A higher CPI means less (perceived) corruption. According to the CPI, Malaysia’s rank in 2009 is 56th in the world. This shows Malaysia has ample room to improve public perception about corruption. In fact, people have been highly vocal against any kind of corruption in the government machinery.

Eradication of Poverty

Poverty eradication must be the first step in the larger effort to address disparities in the socio-economic achievements of the country. Malaysia’s present poverty eradication strategies include: increasing public health care to spur productivity and reduce absenteeism, providing housing, and cooperating with non-governmental organizations to improve the environment and living conditions. Under the present Ninth Malaysian Plan, the government is enhancing *Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia* and various capacity building programs to ensure their effectiveness in lifting households out of poverty. The government also wants to reduce rural-urban income ratio from 1:2.11 in 2004 to 1:2.0 by 2010.

According to Mahathir, no one is against the eradication of absolute poverty regardless of race and irrespective of geographical location. All Malaysians, whether they live in the

rural or the urban areas, whether they are in the south, north, east or west, must be moved above the line of absolute poverty.

Developing Human Capital

It is the human resource that is the most vital for achieving V-2020. A country may be developed materialistically, but if its human resources are kept at bay, then it is unlikely to sustain the economic development. This was communicated to us by numerous people while collecting data collection. Human capital has bearing on many aspects, including public delivery or civil service. In fact, civil servants have emphatic role in achieving V-2020. To bring smoothness in public administration, bureaucracy and bottlenecks must be removed. One respondent maintained: public delivery system needs to be improved in order to realize V-2020. V-2020 requires complete public readiness to embrace the necessary changes, and to do so, it is imperative for a quantum leap toward human resource development to take place. Citing Japan, Switzerland, and South Korea, Abdullah (1993) says these countries do not have minerals, and the climate, land structure and soil are not conducive to agriculture. Yet they have achieved spectacular economic growth on the strength and ingenuity of their human resources.

National Unity

According to former PM Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad (Mohamad, 1991), the most important among all challenges is ensuring a united Malaysian nation: But it would be surprising if the first strategic challenge which I have mentioned the establishment of a united Malaysian nation is not likely to be the most fundamental, the most basic.

The present Malaysian Premier, Dato' Seri Najib Tun Razak, said (Sennyah and Sharmini (2005): Racial and religious differences, skin color and cultures should not be obstacles to unity, as, in principle, all races had the same aims and desires in life.

The remaining categories (other than those included in the affinity diagram) offer many suggestions, but basically revolve around the same issue. Therefore, these suggestions are not itemized as categories, and put in the affinity diagram. We have only one item under this type of category. This item has been expressed by different respondents in different ways. In the following we discuss this type of one-item categories.

Balanced Development

A country that is developed in only one dimension, e.g., economy, may not be called a developed nation as encapsulated in the statement of V-2020. The country needs to be developed multilaterally. This has been echoed by the following messages from the respondents. As seen below, the messages are essentially the same, only different words are used.

- In my opinion development that we, Malaysians, should have, must be balanced in all aspects of life, morally, intellectually, economically, spiritually, socially and politically⁵.
- A more comprehensive meaning of a developed nation so that rather than focusing solely on material/physical development, intellectual, moral and spiritual development will be seen as important as well.
- The parameter and definition of development need to be ascertained. Development is a holistic concept. Infrastructural development alone at the expense of moral, ethical, and social developments may not be a development in the true sense of the term. As such competing to stay at development stage must not ignore the social engineering of the society on moral and spiritual bases. Otherwise development for the sake of development without adequate moral and spiritual bases to cushion the shocks of physical development may merely lead to devil-ment (and not development)!
- Not focused on one area only – must be balanced in all areas.

Public Responsibility

The responsibility of realizing V-2020 should not be solely shouldered by the government or a few individuals; rather every citizen of the nation has a stake towards this achievement. This has been articulated by the respondents in manifold ways:

- Everybody has to play a role in achieving the developed nation status.
- Malaysians must support all the initiatives taken by the government and new policies promulgated by it.
- Every citizen should change his or her attitude and mentality to achieve V-2020.
- If Malaysia does not achieve the status of developed nation by the year 2020, everybody should triple up efforts to achieve the targets.

Communication

As mentioned, achievement of the national vision cannot only be the responsibility of a certain number of individuals; in fact, it is the responsibility of all the people. Therefore, a nationwide awareness about V-2020 must be carried out. This matter has been articulated by the people in the following ways:

- Create awareness in the Malaysian society about how important this V-2020 is.
- To educate the Malaysians more about the V-2020 nine challenges.
- I think government should update the public regarding the status of achievement of V-2020.
- To educate the Malaysians more about the V-2020 nine challenges.

Ethics

Regarding ethics, people voice that if the citizens do not behave ethically or morally, then mere materialistic development has no meaning. Ethical dimension of the society has been encapsulated by the following suggestions:

⁵ While articulating the suggestions, all the respondents have not followed the grammatical rules strictly. We have presented the suggestions as articulated by the respondents.

- Ethical dimension should be progressively addressed, tackled and solved. Unless this aspect of morality is not solved, achievement in other aspects is virtually not possible.
- We should establish a fully moral and ethical society before we achieve a developed nation.
- First and foremost, Malaysians should be aware that in order to develop a nation, they must develop themselves with strong moral and ethical values.
- Society has to change its way of thinking, more open minded, work honest and fair.

Family Institution

Many people have re-emphasized the adage, “Charity begins at home”. Children must be guided properly from the beginning about ethics and morality, and parents have a great role here. The right attitude and integrity in the early stage pave the way for becoming a good citizen in future. This matter has been expressed by the following suggestions:

- To strengthen the family leadership.
- Honor family institution. Do not put parents in the condition where they have to work until they leave their children at the hand of foreigners (foreign maids). If family intuition is honored country will also follow suit.
- Try to develop and nurture the children from the beginning with high ethical and moral values.
- Teaching moral values to the kids right from early stage.

Benchmarking

Benchmarking is a management practice used for achieving radical change in some particular area. In the business context, organizations benchmark others to improve their business processes. There are numerous examples of successful benchmarking exercises (Andersen, et al., 2008; Fawcett, et al., 2009). Similar exercises can be conducted at the national level. For example, Malaysia can learn from Japan regarding how the country maintains its environment and ecosystem while being engaged in developmental activities. What are the strategies of Japan in R&D, transportation, public health, education, etc.? Malaysia can learn from all these. A number of respondents have supported this idea:

- To follow Japan and Korea, how they became developed nations.
- Collaboration with developed countries.

Spiritual Development

In general, Malaysians are religious minded and they like to see that spiritual development takes place in the minds of all Malaysians in tandem with the socio-economic development of the country. A large number of Malaysians’ view is that

materialistic development has no meaning if there is no mental peace among them! The following suggestions are examples of some of their aspiration of dealing with a developed religious life:

- No matter how developed our country is, the development of spiritual and mental is very important.
- Strengthen the spiritual side first.
- Material development must be complemented with social and spiritual development. More emphasis should be placed to social development and also spiritual development.

4. Conclusions

Achieving the status of a developed country is a vision common to many developing nations. Like India, Malaysia has even set up a specific timeline (2020) to reach the milestone. The present research is carried out to gauge the progress made to achieve Malaysian V-2020. In general, a cross section of the people of the nation believe that many more things need to be done before Malaysia can declare herself a developed nation. In addition to the economical aspect, the country also needs to pay serious attention to human resource development – especially prevention of crime and corruption from all levels of the larger society. The survey respondents suggested that the government should play a dual role: On one hand, the government should play its traditional role in strengthening the economy, ensuring quality education to its people and maintaining law and order; on the other hand, it should make the people ready to face the challenges ahead and take the necessary steps to address them successfully.

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Appendix: Extended Affinity Diagram

Balanced Development

- In my opinion, development that we, Malaysians should have must be balanced in all aspects of life - morally, intellectually, economically, spiritually, socially and politically. So we should not follow the development created by western society
- Develop intellectually, culturally, religiously and scientifically

- A more comprehensive meaning of developed nation rather than focusing on material/physical development but intellectual, moral and spiritual development as well
- The parameter and definition of development need to be ascertained. Development is a holistic concept. Infrastructural development alone at the expense of moral, ethical, and social developments may not be a development in the true sense of the term. As such competing to stay at development stage must not ignore the social engineering of the society on moral and spiritual bases. Otherwise development for the sake of development without adequate moral and spiritual bases to cushion the shocks of physical development may merely lead to devil-upment (and not development)!
- We should balance all aspects of life in order to achieve status of a developed nation
- I think a developed nation also needs to have advances and improvements in all aspects – that also includes social and civil institutions. This is an area which Malaysia should look into
- Not focused on one area only – must be balanced in all areas

Benchmarking

- To follow Japan and Korea and learn how they became developed nations
- Collaboration with developed countries

Business

- Less foreign workers
- Penetration in foreign markets

Communication

- Emphasis should be on convincing the people and the world that we are serious in that direction
- Create awareness about vision 2020 in all levels of the nation
- I think government should be alert that Malaysians still need to be educated with more information about vision and mission 2020
- Information regarding vision 2020 should be spread out appropriately
- To educate the Malaysian more about the 9 challenges of vision 2020
- I believe that the status of a developed nation must be communicated to all Malaysians as well as all areas (rural and urban)

Corruption

- Malaysia needs to demolish all of the corruption from lower level to higher level of hierarchy of citizens
- Creation of highly ethical society, free from corrupt practices and encourage healthy competition based on merit
- Be more civic minded and reduce corruption. Corruption will only give Malaysia a bad name in the eyes of other nations
- Malaysia should improve its administration first and stress on ‘zero corruption’ and then Malaysia can continue to think about vision 2020
- Corrupt leaders must be removed
- Eradicate corrupt practices
- Stop bribery among police forces and customs
- Replace ‘know who’ by ‘know how’ in awarding projects to quality bidder, avoid corruptions and have transparency when awarding projects
- No bribery

Economy

- Sustainable economic development
- Control of economy not by one nation but by the whole nation
- Malaysia should be free from corruption, poverty and not dependent too much on foreign labor
- Government should take initiatives to energize investment and business opportunities
- Eliminate poverty
- Distribution of wealth equally to all races
- Fairness in wealth distribution
- Focus on industrialization rather than agriculture. All the developed countries are industrial, then how can Malaysia become a developed country by agriculture?
- Fair income distribution
- Eliminate wealth gap (still significant) between Chinese and Malay
- Stabilize Malaysian economy
- Zero unemployment
- High level per capita income

Education

- Improve on all areas that can contribute towards improvement of Vision 2020, especially the basics of education
- I suggest education system to be more effective
- Educate the people
- Improve the education system
- Change the education system

- National education policy should be implemented fully as planned and do not be swayed by political pressure or ethnic pressure groups
- Ensure that the programs offered in the public and private universities are in the line with market need
- Revisit educational system
- By increasing more programs on education, especially through electronic media
- Equal in education to all races without looking into their color or religion. Be fair in education to all. A Form 5 student or Form 6 student has the results must be given equal chance to enter university and not on 'quota'.
- Entrance to higher education should be by merit not by racial quota
- Strengthen education system that meet current challenges
- Education system: More creativity and innovation
- Free education for everyone from Standard 1 to Form 5. Better training facilities for Form 5 school leavers
- Enhancement in the lower level of education which is primary school
- The education system should be reformatted as up-to-date, not only examination oriented
- Revamp of education system – start school early and inculcate a merit-based system for all levels of study
- The education system should be less inclined towards “exam-oriented” culture
- Education system should prepare one to be creative, innovative, independent and ethical
- Refine education system, don't focus on exam, let the students enjoy the learning in more creative and innovative ways
- Revamp education system to take into consideration of hard and soft skill
- Stress on education to society
- Develop excellent universities in Malaysia
- I would suggest that universities play pivotal role in disseminating good values through its students who become leaders in society after completing their studies
- Malaysian education system especially on the university level have not reached to the high standard. The government should do something like: bring up more foreigners to local universities
- Refer education policy to serve its multi-ethnic nations
- Improve academic system especially in the rural areas

Environment

- Ensure safe environment for the whole nation to live in Malaysia
- All development projects should be environment friendly and preserve the resources for sustainable development
- Development without destructing the environment
- Zero pollution
- Protection of environment/conservation

Ethics

- Ethical dimension should be progressively addressed, tackled and solved. Unless this aspect of morality is not addressed, achievement in other aspects virtually not possible
- We should establish a fully moral and ethical society before we achieve a developed nation
- First and foremost, Malaysians should be aware that in order to develop a nation, they must develop themselves with strong moral and ethical values. Particularly as Muslims, we should adhere to the basics and fundamentals of Islam. Then only we can speak about developed nation.
- Society have to change their way of thinking, more open minded, work really honest and fair.

Family

- To strengthen the family leadership
- Honor family institution. Do not put parents in the condition where they have to work until they leave their children at the hand of foreign maids. If family intuition is honored country, will also follow suit
- Try to develop and nurture the children from the beginning with high ethical and moral values (this is the very must step that should be considered)
- Teaching moral values to the kids right from the early stage

Freedom of Expression

- Press freedom
- Fair justice to all Malaysians – to voice out their opinion!!!
- Think tank should be an important tool in achieving developed nation status, people should not be afraid to express innovative/impossible ideas for new creations
- More freedom in the expression of speech

Government Responsibility

- Full achievement of developed nation status can be attained by 2020 if all the races in Malaysia cooperate and they are aware of all activities and issues facing or planning by Malaysian government
- Strong government with integrity and good governance is a must
- Transparent government
- Private sector and government should cooperate to achieve Malaysian Vision 2020. Good Luck!

- Government should show more enthusiasm in realizing the goals of vision 2020
- Government and private sector should work together, hand in hand
- Develop rural area, there are a lot of rural areas need development and good politicians in order to contribute to the economic growth
- There are also lack of good educational institutions in the rural areas where a lot of teenagers are neglected/denied from gaining knowledge
- Avoid bureaucracy
- Promotion in government sectors for delivery service to public service should be by merit. This is to allow the best persons to serve the public to enhance full development
- One *bahasa* should be English in order to go for globalization
- The monitoring agencies of the public sector must be proactive enough to constantly examine and check the objectives of vision 2020 that these are fully achieved as stipulated. An steering committee on vision 2020 should be set up and to be answerable to the PM to check the performance and achievement of all challenges being set.
- Free and fair election process
- Hire foreigners to educate Malaysians if Malaysia does not have someone who is very good at one aspect
- To upgrade political life to be more democratic
- Elect leaders who view positions of leadership as responsibility and not just privilege
- Development should not be concentrated on urban areas, it should include rural areas as well
- Government should be more transparent in awarding contracts
- The government should be more open in terms of accepting differences of opinions from the public
- Monitor regularly
- Close monitoring system must be in place and has to be communicated to the people. The government must be sincere in telling the people the level of achievement and what immediate improvement plans are put forward
- Government should improve the monitoring the progress towards vision 2020
- Punish severely those not conforming and performing
- Let the best run the job and forgo national pride
- Depending on foreigners, the government cannot run for long time. Also they should look at the moral and ethical sides as well
- Implementing ICT policy by the government with good planning and monitoring system is essential in order to bring benefits for all segments of the society

Human Capital Development

- Focus on human capital development
- Educate people who can produce a civilization. Focus more on people investment and culture and mindset are also important
- Willing to learn new things and equip themselves with technical know how

- Invest on human capital
- Human resource development should be focused on acquiring skills essential in industrial development
- Stress on hard and soft skills
- Invest on skills and education field especially to the university in order to train the young generation towards this goal
- We have to be knowledgeable people to compete with a more developed nation. Our human capital need to be restructured and realigned with a more positive mindset and think global
- To have the right attitude, not necessarily the right skills
- First of all, a developed country is created not only in industrial sector but also with society. Actually, in this point, Malaysian society (people) must be more skilled and in this way more confident
- To increase the amount of skilled manpower in the industry
- Status of developed nation is nothing if the citizens have no values and moral in their lives. As long as many people are not able to develop themselves towards the positive lifestyle (mostly on spiritual), it might be difficult to achieve a developed nation. Or may be vision 2020 just a tool for nothing
- Malaysians should be more independent and seek for more knowledge and education
- Focus on the attitudes and behaviors of people to make them more ethical and conscientious
- The people should possess more positive values such as punctuality, discipline and commitment
- Should encourage on soft skills rather than physical development
- Focus on human resource development – people should be encouraged to think freely, creatively challenge the norms while working together hand in hand with the government for the betterment of the society
- We need to be mentally developed before we can achieve our vision 2020
- Need to change the ‘subsidy’ attitude of Malays
- Emphasize on human capital development and technological development at the same time
- Human resource development – highly skilled, motivated, possess some vision
- Be critical, work harder and be far sighted
- Change the mindset of Malaysians
- Shifts of paradigm, way of thinking among its people and government itself
- Not just give subsidies and help but focus more towards changing the Malaysian way of thinking, especially *bumiputra*. If government just spoon fed them, may be they cannot stand on their own. And here I would like to highlight that make and improve our country but don’t neglect our moral, and ethical as a ‘Malay’ country that rich with “*Budi Bahasa*”
- Mental change of the population
- Open their minds to accept others’ ideas and thinking

Public Responsibility

- Everybody has to play a role in achieving the developed nation status
- All of us should cooperate to develop nation by 2020 and more programs should be implemented through all races and communities
- Government does so many things and Malaysians must support those
- Every citizen should change his or her attitude and mentality to achieve vision 2020
- If Malaysians do not achieve status of developed nation by the year 2020, everybody should triple up efforts to achieve the targets
- More stringent actions and monitoring programs should be in place so that the vision 2020 would reach its goal. All Malaysians, including the government and private sector should be playing active roles to encourage/stimulate the development. Everyone should work together to achieve the vision 2020
- Acknowledgement by all society and nations in all aspects can slowly help achieve developed status
- Maintain all the policies and make sure all Malaysians follow the procedures set by the government
- Everybody should support whatever has been done by Malaysia and think positive for every development. Now we can see Malaysia has KLCC, twin tower, KL tower, the big shopping complexes and son on

Quality of Life

- Make Malaysia independent in terms of food by putting sufficient importance on agriculture. Life gets better when food is cheaper
- Public transportation not tip top
- Public health care not up to a developed nation status
- To find ways to curb the nation's traffic congestion
- Improve the living standard in the rural areas. There are many people in Malaysia, help them first
- Public transportation system must be improved
- Road infrastructure and telecommunication are two important criteria

R&D

- R&D in critical sectors – agriculture and industry
- Inviting more scholars to contribute in the area of research and development
- Recognize and encourage research in universities
- Provide enough funds for R&D and all technological areas and new product development

Social Life

- Attitudes of teenagers must be changed. Social lives and morality must be closely related. Example: 1. *Mat rempit*, 2. Internet (X-rated), 3. Dadah/Ecstasy pill. Start from house than school/IPT. Give them strong *Akidah*.
- Focus on moral, ethical development
- Malaysia's crime rate is high. It is important to have a civilized society. Our country must be clean and healthy place to live in
- Better rural and urban planning and development to avoid unexpected flood due to irresponsible housing projects and to provide comfortable, reliable and affordable public transportation
- More freedom, and less racism
- Fulfill local needs: IT literacy, enhance educational system, solve integrity problems in the society
- Malaysians should make their hearts as nice as a good hearted people
- Malaysia should be more courteous and should open their hearts
- Educate citizens to be more civic-conscious
- To educate the citizens to be more civilized
- Focus on society development – caring, high moral and responsibility
- More caring, giving and taking
- As a Malaysian, think it does not matter if we achieved a developed nation status successfully by 2020 unless we realize that the norm values among Malaysians by understanding and helping each other are more important in order to maintain and remain prosperous in the country for ever
- Need to establish a fully moral and ethical society and a fully caring society
- Culture of caring each other and respect others' opinion
- Increase the moral values in the society

Spirituality

- The most important thing is our intention. The rules are already in Quran and *Sunnah*. Just apply it in our daily life. *Insha Allah*, our efforts will be blessed by Allah swt
- Allah had created the rules in Quran and *Sunnah*, so why people refuse to implement what our creator said. Just implement whatever in Quran and *Sunnah*.
- No matter how developed our country is, the development of spiritual and mental is very important
- Strengthen the spiritual side first
- More and advanced religious approaches should be properly induced to the people
- Teach Malaysians how to live civilized by instilling and applying Islamic concepts. Islam is the best way of life
- Material development must be complemented with social and spiritual development. More emphasis should be given to social development and also spiritual development

- There is a contradiction in the economic growth and social/spiritual growth at the moment. We are improving economically (physically) but the social/spiritual side is suffering. There is no inner peace in the majority of the population. The gap between the rich and poor is widening
- Islamic principle of life must be infused in everything including the public and private sectors of the nations
- Islamic basis should be strong
- Islamic practice, now the country is not fully practicing the Islamic laws
- Back to basics, by adopting every aspect through Islamic approach. This will create society that have all the good aspects by devoting themselves to Allah

Technology

- Knowledge-based and cultural/religious tolerance
- Real support for scientific development as well as moral and values
- Form a body to encourage inventions, innovations competition in science and technology
- Technology: Transfer/import from others and LEARN not only copy
- Wider 'research and development' field. We should be pioneer, not a good follower
- Science and technology need to be improved in order to compete with other company and also in order to achieve the vision
- Introduce a lot more of technological facilities as well as implement the concept of *Islam Hadhari* (Enlighten Islam)
- Import expertise and technology from abroad

Transparency

- Open , fair and transparent government
- Make it more transparent and responsive to people's needs.

Unbiased Practice

- Let there be true democracy where every Malaysian is treated equally.
- Those who commit offences or any wrong doing should be punished regardless of their political party affiliation
- Government should really check about the programmes that have been planned in order to develop the nation. Those programmes should involve all the races in the country so that everyone can contribute to develop the nation
- Mutual help and cooperation among Malaysians, do not differentiate on race, religion and nation
- Ensure all ethnic groups in Malaysia are equally treated

Unity

- Integration of the nation in all aspects should be improved
- Unite all the Malaysians
- To achieve a developed nation status, we must improve our society, we need to be more mature, ethical and united with each other
- Emphasize more on Malaysian unity and strength for the Malaysian nation
- Ensure creation of one nation is fully achieved
- Enhance national unity by reducing ethnic discrimination
- Improve racial understanding and tolerance
- All Malaysian societies must be united as Malaysian nation. Government should play the role to unite Malaysians as a whole in one nation, then the other steps can run smoothly to achieve vision 2020
- Establish a united Malaysia (*Bangsa Malaysia*)