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How Wawasan 2020 could have helped us fight the pandemic



By **Dzulkifli Abdul Razak** - December 31, 2020 @ 12:14am



Frontliners taking swab samples from people in Klang on Dec 20. The Covid-19 pandemic threatens the physical health and psychological well-being of all Malaysians. PIC BY MUHD ASYRAF SAWAL

MOST have forgotten or lost interest in Wawasan 2020. Although it is said to be given another five-year lease of life until 2025, it's far away from what was targeted — a developed country in its own mould based on positive values.

It is guided by nine challenges that are fundamental to arrive at the outcomes. On hindsight, collectively the challenges can be interpreted as a barrier to the invasion of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In other words, had the vision been fully realised, the fight against the virus would have been winnable because each of the nine challenges could easily stand as a buffer that is badly needed.

Challenge 1 talks about a united country under the banner of Bangsa Malaysia — exactly the social solidarity that is needed to break the chain of transmission under the 'kitajagakita' tagline.

This can promote a greater boost in ensuring that the community remains highly safe and secure.

Add to this Challenge 2, that speaks about a psychologically liberated community. Indeed, the pandemic is now threatening not only the physical health but also the psychological well-being of the population in general.

Challenge 3, with the aim of fostering a mature, democratic country, describes the state of readiness in dealing with the pandemic where the populace is collectively responsible and accountable for their *raison d'être*, and democratically able to pick the options that act in the best interest of humanity as a whole.

There is no room for racism and discrimination in flattening the coronavirus curve.

In this context, the next two challenges — 4 and 5 — are symbiotically aligned as a society that is morally and ethically (challenge 4) constructed. At the same time, appropriately liberal and tolerant (challenge 5). Both go a long way in promoting better social bonding.

Therein lies the much-needed behavioural responses that can facilitate or mitigate actions in cases of lockdown or similar situations putting pressure on human dignity and vulnerability.

Challenge 6 closely supports all the above challenges in that it envisages a community which is scientific and progressive.

Needless to say, such an orientation can make Malaysia even safer as policy decisions are evidence-based to start off with. There is still room for debate given the uncertainty ahead with respect to the use of vaccines.

Moreover, citizens are also expected to be scientifically aware in understanding the demand to comply with the standard operating procedures.

STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) alone, however, is not sufficient to cater for the social and ethical behaviours needed to go with it.

This is of utmost importance now when there are still heightened uncertainties about the long-term safety issues that still unsettle globally.

Challenge 7 adds to the above in a way to fully establish a caring society. This means no one is left behind as often touted. More specifically, in economic terms, it refers to Challenge 8 whereby "a fair and equitable distribution of the wealth of the nation" is duly undertaken.

Without doubt, the pandemic can be better handled when inequity and injustice are reduced, if not eliminated. One way to do this is by making society more egalitarian so that the caring elements are inherent in it.

The last challenge, number 9, dwells on establishing a prosperous society with an economy that is fully competitive, dynamic, robust and resilient. Research is showing that during the pandemic, the rich get richer and the poor, poorer.

After all has been said and done, Wawasan 2020, while still relevant for the future, is leaving this year without as much as a whimper.

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