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BOOK REVIEW

**PEMBANGUNAN NEGARA, KOMUNITI DAN INSAN MELAMPAUI 2020
[NATIONAL, COMMUNITY, AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT BEYOND 2020], BY
ABDUL RAHMAN EMBONG. INSTITUT KAJIAN MALAYSIA DAN
ANTARABANGSA, 2007, 55 PAGES. ISBN: 978-983-43443-0-6**

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REVIEW

Pembangunan Negara, Komuniti dan Insan Melampaui 2020 is a book written by Abdul Rahman Embong, a Malaysian sociologist. The content of this book is based on three speech texts delivered by Abdul Rahman for three different occasions. The common theme addressed in this book is focused on national development. Abdul Rahman's speech texts have been reconstructed and presented in the form of this book. It comprises three chapters that discuss community development in national development, human development in national development, and the nation's future development. This book is essential reading material for national development as it is one of the first books that discuss Malaysia's nation-building, focusing on mobilising organic national development.

Abdul Rahman started his book by explaining the importance of community development in national development. According to him, the community's role is essential in building a nation. Therefore, it must be nurtured and strengthened to foster its function and promote sustainable national development. He highlighted that community members must support the community as they personally understand their unfulfilled needs and aspirations that drive them forward. Together with government intervention to empower the community, these efforts can change their future. By supporting national development, community members can overcome impoverishment besides strengthening their social capital further. From his viewpoint, he agrees with Stiglitz (1989), an American economist, who suggests that national development would be wiped out if the community is not empowered with appropriate resources, education, and training that trigger awareness to change and sustainability in the fast-changing world today.

Furthermore, Abdul Rahman highlighted the importance of human development in national development. In order for Malaysia to achieve a developed nation's status, he remarked that its software and hardware developments must be aligned. Alignment of both developments will assist in the achievements of aspired goals and avert futile outcomes. Hardware development refers to the development of infrastructure and the economic market, whereas software development denotes advancement in citizens. Individual development is specifically prioritised as citizens are equipped to prepare and drive the national development process besides ensuring that their own well-being is not neglected. It is a reasonable assumption for national development as fulfilling human capital needs that will eventually assist the grooming of advanced future generations. He further supported the importance of human development by implying that in scenarios where human capital is underdeveloped, social problems arise as a major disadvantage to the country, although economic and infrastructure developments are advanced. He clearly stated that his view on human development is parallel with Mahbub Ul Haq, a Pakistani economist. Human development is a human-oriented development where human beings are the development agents to be empowered and the ultimate goal to be fulfilled in every national development (Ul Haq, 1995).

Lastly, Abdul Rahman discussed the development of Malaysia in the context of the future. He stressed the importance of government applying good governance to prepare and foster the country's present and future developments. He highlighted the year 2020 by referring to Vision 2020, which was thirteen years away when the book was written, and one year has passed at the time of this review. He also emphasised the year 2057, which refers to 36 years from now when Malaysia will reach its 100th anniversary of independence. In preparation for

Malaysia's development for the years 2020 and 2057, he draws attention to two crucial elements that need to be understood by national leaders and people. First, every citizen must contribute to continuous national development for a guaranteed solid foundation for the future. Second, the actions taken must be impartial in all aspects of life and not damaging to future generations. He then discussed and described seven challenges faced by the country. Every Malaysian citizen and leader must understand and acknowledge these challenges as cautionary steps when preparing for the future.

The challenges should be analysed and understood by all parties related to the discussion on the sustainability of 'social contract' as stipulated in the national constitution. The challenges are to raise national unity, to build the Malaysian nation, to maintain understanding and cooperation among the people to combat extremism, conservatism, and militancy and develop a sustainable civil society, to improve established and competitive economic growth, to ensure balanced and holistic national development; and lastly, ensure efficient and democratic administration. In order to sustain Malaysia's concord as a multiracial, multireligious, and diverse country, Abdul Rahman mentioned that these challenges need to be appropriately addressed. He further asserted that the government needs to improve its mechanism in dealing with these challenges. Various demands have to be balanced by the government without sacrificing national democratic principles. Based on this view, we agree with Abdul Rahman that addressing this matter must be done based on constitutional provisions, whereby fundamental and proactive approaches need to be drawn against a damage control approach to avoid harm to the nation's sustainability. To change people's perspective of observing issues from racial lenses to national lenses, step-by-step recommendations are suggested by him. It is believed that this recommendation is to promote inclusiveness among the people.

Based on the critical points raised by Abdul Rahman in this book, we agree with him on the importance of human and community development in leading a holistic and sustainable national development process. Without an emphasis on human and community developments, the development of a nation is precarious in the long run. Individual or human capital acts as an essential element when forming a community within a place. Virtuous individual actions can foster excellent community development in terms of their functions and goals. Indirectly, it allows fundamental development of the nation to take place competently starting from the grassroots. It is evident that individuals and communities are the fundamental aspects of national development, and they must be highlighted from various angles. Lack of attention to these two aspects can result in hampered nation's development. It can trigger numerous

problems among people and the country in the long term. Disrupted human and community development results in recent social ills that are prevalent in the country. Prolonging this issue and without prevention, the process of national development aspired by the people will be disrupted.

Therefore, in line with Abdul Rahman's views, we agree that a robust national development must be initiated and implemented through continuous human and community development. Nevertheless, we also suggest that the government catch up with being onboard on social media or digital platforms. This act will allow the government to get close to the people and explore the reality of what is happening in their everyday lives. Most real-life problems can be found on these platforms. The government's initiative to cater to the problem by following current trends would help to solve existing and upcoming problems. It will allow people to feel seen and heard by the government as the protector of the people. Therefore, it is believed that strengthening national development is possible via the roles of people and communities as well as through the government's effective initiative to cater to and empower the complete progress of national development.

Nevertheless, this book has its advantages and disadvantages. Fortunately, the weaknesses are insignificant, and the advantages outweigh the drawbacks. This book's advantage is that it is unique in its composition and reflects Abdul Rahman's extensive understanding of the national development process in detail. He begins each chapter comprehensively with a historical background. The historical background refers to the main context of the discussion before he discusses further questions or concerns that the people, communities, and leaders need to address when discussing the development of people, communities, and nations. Abdul Rahman used a thorough and clear approach in presenting the background of an issue. He provided factual writing strengthened with statistical data about a topic. This technique is vital to make it easier for readers to understand the discussion comprehensively. Readers who do not have any prior background information on the subject matter will understand what is being discussed without difficulty.

In addition, another advantage of this book is its contents. The contents are grounded and problem-solving in nature. After describing a problem in detail, Abdul Rahman provided solutions that can be adopted by the parties he discussed in the book, namely individuals, community, and also leaders in the context of a nation. He also clearly stated the need to empower educational institutions and how educators should take up the challenge to designate the human capital, communities, and nation. The approach of providing solutions in accordance with the needs of relevant parties in the discussion is valuable. It is easier for the respective

parties to identify the steps that have to be adopted when addressing the problems encountered. Therefore, we believe that this book is an appropriate choice to serve as an essential source of reference for the public, students, community leaders, business entrepreneurs, academicians, or policymakers across various fields to better understand national development. A minor disadvantage of this book refers to the arrangement of chapters, which does not reflect the book's title. However, this issue is insignificant, and we believe that readers can still understand the contents, which are the most critical part of the book.

Overall, Abdul Rahman's work enables a full understanding of the complete development process of the nation. The perception that a country's development is the primary responsibility of national leaders' is a misunderstanding that needs to be rectified. Instead, it requires a joined participation effort from every individual as a nation's citizen, every community regardless of community-based organisations or non-governmental organisations, and most importantly, every democratically elected leader from the ruling government. In other words, the nation's development demands the process of bottom-up and top-down participation, and improvement of all parties in a country. Therefore, strengthening and empowering human and community development is required in order to achieve sustainable, holistic, as well as progressing national development. It should be carried out without sacrificing beliefs, customs, cultures, and traditions observed and practised by every individual as citizens of a nation. This applies not only to Malaysia in particular but also to other countries in general. In times of political instability, a complete understanding of national development is essential and should be understood by every Malaysian citizen. It could help the people to remain steadfast in facing the instability as they are aware of their roles and the impacts their roles play on the country. Indeed, the spirit of being a good national citizen is indispensable to assist the smooth running of the country's administration besides creating a harmonious atmosphere among Malaysians.

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