



NCWO QUARTERLY

Newsletter of the
National Council of Women's Organisations
Majlis Kebangsaan Pertubuhan-Pertubuhan Wanita Malaysia

A quarterly publication to promote the advancement of women and the exchange of ideas between NGOs and like-minded people

Volume 9, Issue 1

January-March 2010

The power of the ordinary citizen Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah

*Part II of the keynote speech delivered by
Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah at the launch of the book "Multiethnic Malaysia"
at UCSI University, Kuala Lumpur.*

Reforms

The political framework of this country cries out for reform. But reform is not about the blind embrace of the new. That would be to fly from disorder to confusion. Our path to reform must come from a recovery of the "old" living spirit of constitutionalism, and the "old" values of freedom and justice, and the "old" memories each of us carries in themselves of what is good about our nation. So far I have spoken more generally about principles. I want to turn now to some examples of how these can work out in pursuing particular reforms.

National reform must begin with reform of our party system. This is because one of the chief reasons this nation is sick is that we have a diseased party system. A diagnosis of the disease of the party system finds that the parties are sick because they have strayed from the constitutional principles that govern them (they are subject to the Societies Act). In doing so, they have become undemocratic. In becoming undemocratic they have lost legitimacy. In losing legitimacy they have lost public support and the ability to rejuvenate themselves. The cure, surely, is for them to conform themselves again to constitutional principles.

I have warned that UMNO like any other political party that has been in power for so long, must reform, or it will be tossed out by the people. The people themselves have had a taste of the power of their free vote. They know that parties and governments answer to the people, and not vice versa, they want a repeal of draconian laws, and they have lost patience with corruption. They seek accountability, justice and rule of law. The people are ahead of the government of the day, but the principles they want to see applied are universal, and they are enshrined in our Constitution.

It is not just UMNO that needs to reform. The entire political system needs to change, to be in greater conformity with our Constitution and in the spirit of the Rukun Negara, which says from these diverse elements of our population, we are dedicated to the achievement of a united nation in which loyalty and dedication to the nation shall over-ride all other loyalties.

IN THIS ISSUE

**Part 2 of
Tengku Razaleigh**
– by Tengku Razaleigh
Hamzah 1

**Global Warming:
Current scenario
controlled by
Geopolitics**
By Rieta Rahman 3

Editorial 4

**Mapping
NCWO's
outcome** 6

**Convention on
Women and 1
Malaysia:
Women as catalyst
for Transformation**
By Rashila Ramli,
IKON-UKM 7

Cont. on page 2

We should not expect our political parties to reform of their own accord. Leaders who owe their position to undemocratic rules and practices are the last people to accept reform. The people must demand it. I say we need a movement embraced by people at all levels and from every quarter of our rakyat, to establish a national consensus on how our political parties should conduct themselves from now on. In the spirit of the Rukun Negara, that consensus should be based on a set of principles such as the following:

1. All political parties are required to include in their constitutional objectives the equality of citizenship as provided for in the Federal Constitution.
2. An economic and political policy that political parties propagate must not discriminate against any citizen.
3. All parties shall include and uphold constitutional democracy and the separation of powers as a fundamental principle.
4. It shall be the duty of all political parties to adhere to the objectives of public service and refrain from involvement in business, and ensure the separation of business from political parties.
5. It shall be the duty of all political parties to ensure and respect the independence of the judiciary and the judicial process.
6. All parties shall ensure that the party election system will adhere to the highest standards of conduct, and also ensure that the elections are free of corrupt practices. Legislation should be considered to provide funding of political parties.
7. It shall be the duty of all parties to ensure that all political dialogues and statements will not create racial or religious animosity.
8. All parties undertake not to use racial and communal agitation as political policies.
9. To remove and eradicate all barriers that hinder national unity and Malaysian identity.
10. To uphold the Federal and State Constitutions

and their democratic intent and spirit, the Rule of Law, and the fundamental liberties as enshrined in Part II of the Malaysian Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

What we need now is the rise of an empowered public. Democracy in Malaysia is fragile so long as public opinion remains weak. Our hope for a more democratic future depends on our ability to build a strong public opinion. It is good news that a vigorous body of public opinion, aided by information and communication technologies, is in the making on the internet. I myself rely on it through my blog. If not for my blog, what I say would scarcely get out in the mainstream media. We need a freedom of information act, and I call for the repeal of the Printing Presses Act. It is silly that we limit the number of newspapers while every person with a blog or a twitter account can publish to the world. In limiting the printed media we have only succeeded in dumbing it down, so that those who rely only on the printed mass media and the terrestrial broadcast channels are actually the poorer for it.

Race and hope

Let us end by returning to the theme of racial harmony. I repeat: the constitutional guarantees are ironclad. We ought to feel secure in the Constitution's protections of our rights. A free people must be a secure people.

Another story: In 1962, when I was a delegate to the United Nations, the late Tun Ismail and I went out one evening to a posh restaurant on New York's East Side. The maitre d' turned us away firmly. No, he said, the restaurant was closed for a private function. We could see clearly that the restaurant was open. We understood that we were being denied entry because we're "coloured". This is despite the fact that our reservation had been made by the UN's offices.

Today, in 2008, an African-American man is President of the United States. He has just won the Nobel Peace Prize. In 46 years, and well within my lifetime, how far things have come. Had you told me in 1962, after that incident, that a black man would be president in my life time, I would not have believed you. This change did not happen without struggle.

From Leo Tolstoy to Henry Thoreau to Gandhi to Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela, we see a thread of conviction about the overriding ethical claims of our common humanity. It is more important that we are alike in being sons and daughters of God than that we are different. This is also the thread of a spirit and method of resistance. Where all reasonable persuasion fails, the final "No" to wrongdoing, the place at which the citizen stands up to defend something fundamental, is through peaceful resistance. I allude to this only as a reminder of the final redoubt of the free citizen. Things may or may not have come to such a bad

state that we must rise in this fashion, but let us be conscious of the power we hold in knowing just who we are and what we are capable of as ordinary citizens.

If the authorities continue to do what is unjust, to ride roughshod over constitutional rights, to deny the sovereignty of the rakyat and the primacy of our Constitution, we rest secure in the knowledge that history shows us that the just cause, defended stoutly, persistently and peacefully, will prevail, and sooner than you might expect. ■



Global Warming: Current scenario controlled by Geopolitics

By Rieta Rahman

The whole global perspectives of the climate change scenario dramatically changed when US President Barack Obama pulled the issue to the top, leading the movement. Immediately the seriousness of the situation is deeply accentuated and global cooperation across the borders necessitated, the potential threat of the aggravated impact of the devastation on the lives of the future generations are endeavoured to mitigate now with concerted cooperation, unlike in the Bush era. Climate change affecting the lives of the global population whether in the industrialized or in the developing countries alike, is a greater challenge today side by side with the contemporary economic downturn. Yet some are badly affected. The developing countries in the Asia Pacific region and Africa would be besieged aggressively because of their economic deprivation over their geographical eminence and vulnerabilities.

Contrarily, the much expected Copenhagen meet brought about a new dynamics to the concern, posing greater challenges on the global or 'climate warming', as researchers/critiques would prefer to term it, pointing out to the exaggeration by the scientists under politicisation. Clearly two sides emerged combating each other on the cause and effect of the overwhelming change in the climate. 'A series of controversies in the past year have facilitated those opposing the seriousness of the

problem,' the controversies over the scientific interpretation of Inter Governmental Panel on Climate Change, IPCC, a body designed to get scientific information on the climate change and obtain governments' mandate on the scientists' conclusion, yet 'problem lies not with the science itself, but the way science has been used by politicians to imply certainty', a recent edition of the Economists says in its Spin, science and climate change article, adding, "the notion that the scientific establishment has suppressed evidences to the contrary has provided plenty of non-expert politicians with an excuse not to spend money reducing carbon, So the scientists' shameful mistakes have certainly changed perceptions. They have not, however, changed the science itself," indicate the situation.

The Copenhagen meet was hijacked by climate change extremists alleged various lobbyists, at the revelation of 'a stash of e-mails from and to various researchers at the Climatic Research Unit of the University of East Anglia, found its' way into the web; unwillingness to share data which broke the spirit, if not the letter, of Britain's Freedom of information Act; an aggressive attitude of peer review of papers by opponents and an apparent willingness to hedge science in the face of politics' (from the same report of the Economists), had greatly shaken the unity over global warming.

Cont. on page 4

Editorial

A large number of people in Malaysia do not seriously take up social issues or make efforts to correct discrepancies in their work place and are not critical of environmental problems such as clogged drains, rubbish littered everywhere, pot holes in roads and dirty canteens and stalls in streets with cockroaches and mosquitoes flying all over the place. Rats are also busy running around scavenging for food. Garbage bins overflowing with rubbish are not collected for days in many streets.

We grumble among ourselves but few of us have the initiative to complain to the authorities. This state of affairs continues today.

Without the change in mindset, without being passive to environmental destruction and without wanting to contribute the best in our country, without having the knowledge of why we should not over consume our natural resources, which unfortunately is limited, not critical at all, of those who damage our natural environment, we would never have the mind and the curiosity to ask ourselves why we destroy and over consume our natural resources and leave very little or nothing at all behind for our children, grand children and the future generation.

For the past many years our politicians, have not been truly serious about forest destructions, river and land pollution and over use of pesticides in agriculture.

These are proofs that good management is lacking. However we are slowly seeing the signs of change. Our politicians are slowly waking up from their long sleep.

Our Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak is adamant now in working towards improving the natural environment of Malaysia. He has plans to map out a plan to reduce its dependence on fossil fuels, by such methods as increasing usage of energy from renewal resources. The plan also includes to cut carbon emissions and improve global energy security. He also reminded Malaysia to make the energy industries more efficient amidst increasing energy prices and harmful emissions.

The Prime Minister commissioned a study to restructure and realign its energy sector. He said Malaysia will be looking at four main sectors to implement green technology, namely, energy, transport, building and water.

However the NGOs, concerned citizens, the general public, the elites and the academicians should make every effort to cooperate with the authorities and urge them to implement these programmes. For the government to take us more seriously, we need to expand our group, become more knowledgeable in the areas of the natural environment, social, economic and political issues, so that together, we have a greater opportunity to create a developed society by the year 2020.

Cont. from page 3

It now appears that much data (superannuated impacts of carbon emission) was manipulated to suit political objectives, accentuating actual statistics of the climate change, critics embark on figures of IPCC as seriously sidetracking, overstating facts.

The other side of the debate saying nature is going through a cycle it always has gone through periodically. Having said that, it is of course, true that human contribution to pollution must be arrested. As the change is manifested, the industrialised countries affably bearing responsibility for the cause must rightfully arise to widen their support to mitigate and adapt to the new circumstances faced by the developing countries from climate disasters.

But here again there has to be pragmatic and realistic programmes for both mitigation and adaptation. Countries like Bangladesh cannot be expected to implement pollution reduction programmes in the same way as the advanced capitalist countries. Where are the resources? The brunt of the costs and resources to achieve plans with respect to climate change in countries like Bangladesh must be borne by developed countries like the US and European nations. A huge 130 million people living in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka on the low elevation coastal zones, that are less than 2 feet above the sea level, the rise of sea level by 10 feet if correctly delineated would cause the whole coastal zone to vanish in no time.

Again, as the Asia Pacific region is in peril of the global/climate warming, the western (industrialized) nations must come forward to bailout the developing countries to adapt to the catastrophe of sea level rise, flood,

drought and salination of surface water in those populous regions. Moreover, consensus among the countries, which are affected by the climate change, becomes essential for a pragmatic culmination of the negotiation process, bear yet another chance in world conferences on climate change.

The UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon enlarged on it recently urging governments to do more to reduce the risks, which effect the poor the most. Last year (2008) alone 236,000 people lost their lives in over 300 disasters. More than 200 million people were directly affected in South Asia and estimated damage totaling \$180 billion dollars, the secretary general of the UN informed the conference on 'Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction'. South Asia, habitating 700 million people, impoverished with a huge manpower is the most densely populated district of the world will be hit hard. Geographically and evidently the region endures most vulnerability due to climate change occurrences. The rise of sea level by 10 feet as predicted would immerse vast areas of agricultural lands from these countries, creating serious food crises, and generating huge number of climate refugees from the area.

The IPCC has predicted an average global rise in temperature of 1.4 C (2.5 F) to 5.8C (10.4 F) within 1990 to 2100. Controversies apart, ice in Iceland is fast melting, polar ice is vanishing, glaciers are retreating, storm, cyclones, flooding, and earthquakes, Tsunami are increasing in intensity.

While the climate related events are already increasing fast, it is poverty and political indifferences of the governments' (of Industrialised countries) inaction could trigger disasters having worse bearing on the impoverished large population of the world, if action is not taken in time.

Adversely a recently publication titled, *The Real Global Warming Disaster: Is the Obsession with Climate Change Turning out to be Most Costly Scientific Blunder in History* by Christopher Booker, a weekly columnist for the Sunday Telegraph, in the endeavour to bring a balance on both sides of the debate expands on a global warming chapter from his previous book, *Scared to Death*, co-written with Richard North, a climate researcher, to argue that the earth is not warming. According to him, efforts to mitigate what he claims to be an imaginary problem will devastate the global economy and shift the balance of power

to favour Asia or Africa to the detriment of the European Union and the U.S, familiar to readers of climate-change-hoax literature, as he terms: climate change research relies on flawed computer models; the hockey stick graph of temperature rise, made famous by Al Gore, is based on inaccuracies; the costs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions will be huge, the political difficulties of realising them untenable, and the results inadequate. Booker, who created large scale agreements among readers, stated his purpose to put all the complex arguments on both sides of the debate into chronological context, at the same time siding with the critics of carbon traders.

As they argue, the recent warming is not unprecedented. The Holocene Maximum of 7000-3000 BC, the Roman Warming of 200BC-540AD, the Medieval Warming of 900-1300 were all warmer than now, yet the planet survived. We are told that global warming causes an ever-growing number of extreme weather events. Yet hurricane activity was lower in the 2000s than in the 1930s, 1940s or 1950s. The IPCC's 2007 report confirmed, "There is no clear trend in the annual numbers of tropical cyclones." There were seven major droughts between 1900 and 1920, seven between 1921 and 1940, eight between 1941 and 1960, five between 1961 and 1980, but only three between 1981 and 2000.

The same IPCC report said, "Antarctic sea ice extent continues to show inter-annual variability and localised changes but no statistically significant average trends, consistent with the lack of warming reflected in atmospheric temperatures averaged across the region. ... Current global model studies project that the Antarctic Ice Sheet will remain too cold for widespread surface melting and is expected to gain in mass due to increased snowfall."

In conclusion

All said and done, evidences will show climate change is taking place. Yet what might be causing the world climate to dramatically change its pattern started a new debate over exaggerated statistics on global warming or as a phenomenon of natural cycle. Perhaps, letting the already dissenting groups to refresh their activities directing towards the lobbyists favouring oil companies', could leave

Cont. on page 6

an explanation. This also proves nothing is beyond politics having variable agendas. While impact of the forecasted cataclysm is being witnessed literally, though not yet in the severe form and some of them regarding global warming been overstated, the mitigation, whether the excessive carbon combustion exchanges for costly investment for renewable energy source, or as claimed that natural evolution and human contributed pollution curtailed, which degrading the environment, are the magnitudes to concentrate on before it gets late.

Plenty of uncertainty remaining that argues for, not against action. The range of possible outcome of global warming would not be limited to 2 C as it appears but the range of rise in temperature could be huge; with catastrophe compared to the cost of averting climate change in time would be smaller. We need not alter our views over the controversies, on the urgent need for change. Not in the same manner governments used science to make their points. With climate change, without inventing stories, the truth, with all the uncertainties and caveats forewarn for urgent actions.

There is the biggest stake here, investment, private financing for reducing emissions, there are investors with trillions of dollars willing to get engaged in the climate crisis business. So, there are corporations, lobbyists, brokers, a section of politicians, a section of media. The climate crisis business-people and others need a framework to secure their investment and return Climate crisis is not beyond politics and geopolitics. Market and profits are there also. So, the stakes are of trillions of dollars, yet stakes of the rich. People also have a stake there in climate crisis. The demands articulated by Climate Justice Action, are to leave fossil fuels in the ground; reassert people's and community control over production; re-localise food production; massively reduce over-consumption, particularly in the North; respect indigenous and forest peoples' rights; and recognise the ecological and climate debt owed to the peoples of the South and make reparations. The climate crisis has taken the character of political problem with many political variables. The geopolitics of climate crisis compels many to fear that climate change negotiation is in for a delayed train. ■

Mapping NCWO's Outcome - based Strategic Directions for the 10th MP

By Ms Usha Pillay, Volunteer of NCWO, the Environment Commission.

On 9th January 2010, a group of 47 members of NCWO met at the Shah's Motel to participate in a workshop entitled "Mapping NCWO's Outcome-based Strategic Directions for the 10th Malaysia Plan

The day long programme was conducted by Professor Dr. Datuk Noor Azlan Ghazali from the Graduate School of Business, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

The workshop saw active participation on the part of the members who were divided into six groups to deal with strategic directions to be taken in the fields of Economy, Science and Technology, Education, Environment, Equal Rights Opportunities and Participation, Unity and Peace as well as Women's Quality of Life and Health.

At the end of the session the members were successful in generating the first draft of Major Outcomes, Key Result Areas and Key Strategies for each of these areas. A follow up meeting was held to finalise the document which was then forwarded to EPU for their necessary action.

Convention on Women and 1 Malaysia: Women as catalyst for Transformation

By *Rashila Ramli, IKON-UKM*

On March 27, 2010, almost 1000 participants gathered at the Plenary Hall of the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre (KLCC) to deliberate on the role of women within the framework of 1 Malaysia. The meeting was indeed timely because the country needed to take stock of its wellbeing, and one can say that women will be at the centre of the transformation that the country has to go through if Malaysia wants to become a developed and respected nation by 2020.

The Convention had three objectives. First, to illuminate the meaning of 1 Malaysia for women in a multiethnic society. Second, to share experiences of living 1 Malaysia through examples articulated by public opinion leaders, academicians, students, and activists. Third, to access present challenges and identify key areas of concern faced by Malaysian especially the youth, professional women and organizations in civil society.

The Convention was graced by the presence of the YAB Datuk Seri Najib Tun Abdul Razak, the Prime Minister of Malaysia who came to officiate the event. In the opening speech, the Prime Minister emphasized that the country recognizes the fact that women have contributed as leaders in their own rights, and women can be the catalyst of change in the desire of Malaysia to accelerate its growth within the next ten years. The keynote address was delivered by Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, the wife of the Prime Minister who is the patron of the Convention. Datin Seri Rosmah pointed out that in order for transformation to take place, the intellectual capital, mental strength and the empowerment of women must continue at a greater pace to commensurate with the required changes in society.

Departing from the customary workshop format, the participants were given the opportunity to become members of three laboratories: the Youth Lab, the Professional Women Lab, and the Civil Society Organizations' Lab. In each lab, participants were asked to express their concerns and formulate the issues in key areas of concerns that could be used as input for the Resolution of the Convention. Through sheer hard work and ability to focus, the participants of each lab, facilitated by moderators and rappateurs managed to accomplish their tasks by presenting 4-6 key areas of concern for each group.

It was a daunting task for the Drafting Committee headed by Tan Sri Prof. Dato' Dr. Sharifah Hapsah Syed Hasan Shahabudin, the President of NCWO to compile and synthesize the feedback into the Resolution for Convention. Time was short, pressure was high, and inclusiveness of ideas had to be maintained. Through the stewardship exhibited by Tan Sri Sharifah, the work was accomplished rather painlessly. She even managed to churn out two verses of Seloka to commemorate the occasion.

Six resolutions were presented to the participants of the Convention. Specific target groups addressed by the resolutions are all Malaysian women, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Ministry of Information and Culture, and the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development. These resolutions can be used by different women's organizations to strengthen their own capabilities.

The Convention would not have proceeded smoothly without the commitment given by members of the staff of the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, the Drafting Committee from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), members of the Institut Sosial Malaysia (ISM), NCWO and scholars from various institutions of higher learning in Malaysia. More importantly, the Convention recognizes the unlimited potential of women and their ability to realize the goals of 1 Malaysia.

*"Enam belas gendang memecah sepi
Alunan irama satu nadi
1 Malaysia berwarna warni
Wanita memacu dengan berani*

*Gendang dipukul bertalu talu
Hati bergerak ke arah satu
1 Malaysia matlamat dituju
Ayuh kaum wanita segera maju"
(Tan Sri Prof. Dr. Sharifah Hapsah)*

*"Sixteen drums producing rhythmic beats
Making melodies within a heartbeat
1 Malaysia is colourful indeed
All Malaysian women let us move forth with speed*

*The drums were pounded with constant rate
Our hearts move in unison toward one state
The goal of 1 Malaysia is our fate
Come on women, do not hesitate"*

NCWO CONFERENCE ROOM

Fully air conditioned, NCWO conference room
Available for rent:
Address : No: 46, Jln.14/29, 46100, Petaling Jaya.
Capacity : up to 40 people.

For more details please call :
Tel : 03-79543008
Fax : 03-79542881
E-Mail: ncwohq@yahoo.com / zarasein@hotmail.com

EDITORIAL TEAM

Editor : Datin Zaharah Alatas
Editorial Board : Dato' Ramani Gurusamy
Datin Nursiah Bt. Sulaiman
June Yeoh
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kiranjit Kaur

Advisor : Prof. Tan Sri Dato' Dr. Sharifah Hapsah, President
Distribution : NCWO Malaysia

Q & A and INVITATION TO WRITE

1. Questions & Answers :

Do send in your questions regarding women and health which should be brief and clear and we shall do our best to answer them.

2. Write In :

We would like our readers to write their comments on any current issue or those raised by NCWO Quarterly.

We would very much appreciate news and events and activities your organisation is involved in. You may write in Bahasa Malaysia as well.

Do send your articles and rejoinders of not more than 500 words to be included in the next NCWO Quarterly **(April - June 2010) latest by 8th June 2010.**

* National Council of Women's Organisations, Malaysia:

Email : ncwohq@yahoo.com
Website : <http://www.ncwomalaysia.org.my>

* NCWO Community-Recycling-ICT Centre:

Address : No 46, Jalan 14/29,
46100 Petaling Jaya, Selangor.

Tel : (603) 7954 3008
Fax : (603) 7954 2881

What is NCWO ?

The National Council of Women's Organisations (NCWO) Malaysia was formed in 1963.

It is a non-political, non-religious consultative and advisory body for women's organisations affiliated to it.

The council promotes the development and advancement of women.

Its purpose is to eliminate the major disadvantages, inequalities and discrimination affecting women.

NCWO VISION

A just society free from discrimination in which women at all levels enjoy equality through the promotion of their human rights. NCWO continues to be the leading advocate of women's human rights in the sustainable development and advancement of society.