

Wacana Pembangunan/*Discourses on Development*

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

The special section, *Discourses on Development*, which was started in *Akademika 68*, January 2006, has received good response from our contributors and readers. Although there is some lag in terms of follow-up contributions, we are happy to continue in this issue with two more pieces. Both are on the important roles of the social science in promoting growth, competitiveness and development.

The first paper titled "Promoting Growth, Competitiveness, and the Crucial Roles of the Social Sciences" is by Professor Joan M. Nelson who holds the Pok Rafeah Distinguished Chair in International Studies and is Visiting Professor at the Institute of Malaysian and International Studies (IKMAS), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, for the period October 2006 through May 2007. She hails from the United States of America, where she is affiliated with the Woodrow Wilson International Center of the Smithsonian Institution, and with American University. She is a political economist interested in the politics of social and economic reforms and institutional change. Her paper was originally presented at a colloquium on January 11-12, 2007 organised by the International Institute of Public Policy and Management (INPUMA), the University of Malaya, in collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education, on the theme "Managing Universities for the Future." The colloquium explored issues of leadership, governance and management in creating internationally competitive universities. In the paper, she argues that while there is widespread agreement that science and technology are crucial to promote national development and capacity to compete in the international economy, views differ widely on the role and priority of social sciences in the universities of the future. Her paper draws on the history of technological progress in other countries to support the proposition that social sciences are essential complements to successful transfer of advanced technology, as well as serving additional crucial roles in promoting good governance and economic growth.

The second paper is by Professor Abdul Rahman Embong, Principal Research Fellow at the Institute of Malaysian and International Studies (IKMAS), UKM, and President of the Malaysian Social Science Association. This paper is based on his presidential address at the Social Science Seminar on "The Role of Social Science in Malaysian National Development" held on 21-22 November 2006 in Putrajaya and jointly organised by the Malaysian Social Science Association, the Malaysian National Commission for UNESCO, and the Ministry of Women, Family and Social Development Malaysia. In this paper, he argues that Malaysia must make serious investment for the advancement of social science as a corpus of knowledge that can meaningfully contribute towards

ensuring balanced development in the country, and must give due recognition to the role of social science and social scientists. He puts forward two important proposals. First, the need to form the Malaysian National Social Science Research Council to serve as the official umbrella body to oversee and fund research in the social sciences and humanities. Second, the establishment of the Malaysian Social Science Academy – an initiative that a number of other Asian countries have done. According to him, the Social Science Academy should serve as a centralised body that could house various public social science and humanities research institutes in the country. This would greatly facilitate the pooling together of our research expertise and resources, planning of our research priorities and coordination of research programmes and projects. In his view, Malaysia must take the bold step in making the necessary investment not only for the advancement of social science as a corpus of knowledge but also to institutionalise it in the form of official bodies mentioned above.