

Event	6R recovery plan raises hope
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# 6R recovery plan raises hope

THE clear announcement on Friday by Finance Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Aziz of the 6R economic recovery plan is most welcome in these anxious times.

The first four Rs – covering Resolve, Resilience, Restart and Recovery – are presently on track and could be achieved with a stronger political will to move faster. These aspirations raise our expectations for better economic growth, fairer income distribution and better welfare for all Malaysians, regardless of race.

The last two Rs are Revitalise and Reform – and to truly achieve these two goals, our present economic model must be transformed significantly. We cannot do more of the same, we cannot carry on with business as usual. Some old norms must be radically reformed and new thinking adopted if we are to be successful.

The Covid-19 crisis and subsequent global economic recession have caused a great deal of uncertainty regarding our future well-being. The political turmoil Malaysia is currently experiencing has further eroded our hopes for a brighter future. Hence the Finance Minister's 6R recovery plan is very welcome indeed.

However, the 6R plan, together with the 2021 Budget and the now postponed 12th Malaysia Plan cannot and should not be a repeat of "old normal" policies.

The world's economies, including Malaysia's, are facing a socio-economic crisis largely due to some wrong policies in the past and bad implementations. In my opinion, some of these have been as follows:

> The wide and worsening income gap between the rich and the poor. The new normal economic model should aim to narrow this



Photo: Filipina/The Star

large wealth disparity. This would mean taxing the very rich much more to raise the standards of living of the poor who are struggling to make ends meet.

> The basic needs of the rakyat have to be more adequately met in the recovery plan and especially in the 12th Malaysia Plan. The Covid-19 crisis has revealed more starkly the large numbers of poor, the hungry and the homeless among those of us who are embarrassingly better off.

I'm sure that cramped and dirty housing provided to foreign workers helped to spread Covid-19. Surely we could do better to build more low-cost but healthy houses for the poor?

> Budgets and five-year plans are not supposed to be exclusively concerned with economic growth

and raising incomes only. They are also meant to improve the quality of life of all Malaysians. Hence, human rights, the many unfulfilled social reforms and the environment have to be promoted, enhanced and protected more effectively.

This can be achieved by seriously implementing the many United Nations proposals that we have been somewhat neglecting in the past. This includes the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals that we should implement with a stronger political will.

(The goals are designed to be a "blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all of humankind", and Malaysia has adopted them.)

> The 6Rs are great aspirations but the question on my mind, and

on most thinking minds surely, is, will the new government be able to implement the last two most important Rs, to Revitalise and Reform?

Revitalising and reforming the economy would or should mean, inter alia:

a) Restructuring our education system to make it more internationally competitive;

b) Reforming our labour policies, especially in regard to employing such large numbers of foreign workers;

c) Reorganising the public services to better reflect the population's composition;

d) Redefining the role and scope of the private sector – should we depend so much on government-linked companies?

e) Ensuring our national institutions are professional and honest and fair in upholding an efficient administration that is free from politicisation and corruption.

The government's 6R strategy is encouraging, promising and welcome, and needs our full support. But unless the strategy fully takes into account the above and many other public policy issues that should be discussed widely with NGOs, academia and business and community leaders, we will not progress much. Instead, we will stick to the old normal and play the old record and lose our momentum to move on to the new normal and a new socioeconomic model that we all desperately need for the benefit of all Malaysians, and especially the poor in our society.

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