



**HIS EXCELLENCY MR NGA KOR MING
MINISTER OF HOUSING AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT
MALAYSIA**

MALAYSIA RURAL SYMPOSIUM 2024
***Economic Diversity, Resilient Future:
Growing Rural Prosperity***

Date & Day

8 August 2024, Thursday

Duration:

8 Minutes

Place:

Damar Sari Hall, Complex F, Putrajaya

**His Honourable Dato' Seri Dr. Ahmad Zahid bin Hamidi,
Deputy Prime Minister (Minister of Rural and Regional
Development)**

(salutations)

**Datuk TPr Dr. Alias bin Rameli
Director General,
Federal Department of Town and Country Planning
(PLANMalaysia)**

**Dr. Mohamed Helal Uddin,
Director Research,
Centre of Intergrated Rural Development for Asia and The
Pacific (CIRDAP)**

1. Distinguished guests, esteemed participants, ladies and gentlemen.
2. It is with great pleasure and enthusiasm that I extend a warm welcome to each and every one of you to the Malaysia Rural Symposium 2024. I would also like extend a special greeting to our fellow CIRDAP members from countries across Asia and The Pacific, **Selamat Datang** and a warm welcome to Malaysia! We are delighted to have you join us for the National Symposium on Rural Planning and Development 2024. Your presence here today adds great value to our discussions and exchange of ideas.
3. Thank you to all guests and participants, please look forward to a fruitful and engaging symposium.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guest, Ladies and Gentleman

Urbanisation and Rural

4. Today's symposium marks a significant milestone as we come together to address a crucial aspect of our nation's development - rural advancement through spatial planning and development.
5. I was born in Kota Bharu, in the state of Kelantan, on the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia, then spend my years in Ayer Tawar, in Perak. I witnessed first-hand the differences and changes between urban and rural development landscape. And you know what, all of this got me thinking. What are the things that drive the rural economies and development in Malaysia? Rural gives the laidback and relaxing vibes, it was the kind of living I wanted for myself and my family. But there were just not much opportunities there or rather any rural areas in Malaysia. Many of the people in rural areas have moved to big cities in search of jobs and opportunities. It's not anyone's fault this happens but I do feel like we need to rethink the urban-rural dynamics in Malaysia.
6. Currently, Malaysia's urban population is growing rapidly. **In 2023, 75.5% of Malaysians lived in cities, a figure expected to rise to 85% by 2040, compared to a global average of about 55%.** This rapid urbanization rate is alarming. Provision for housing, infrastructure and recreational spaces to meet with the growing demand of urban population is a big challenge indeed. Increased population, limited space, and rising cost especially in city

centres has pushed the population to the hinterland and some even encroached into rural green areas.

7. From a spatial perspective, urban land expansion is surpassing population growth by 50%, set to increase global urban built-up areas by 1.2 million km² by 2030, as noted by the World Bank (2023). In Malaysia, urban expansion is extensive and inevitable.
8. So, what does this have to do with rural? Well, everything. Contrary to common belief, the relationship between urban and rural areas is highly interdependent and mutually beneficial.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guest, Ladies and Gentleman

PLANNING: Urban-Rural Linkages

9. We are now standing at the crossroad. Urban and rural boundaries are becoming less distinct, giving way to interconnected areas that integrate both urban and rural aspects. This shift is a pivotal moment for communities, offering opportunities for improved infrastructure, healthcare, and economic growth, nevertheless it also poses a risk to cultural erosion, higher living costs, and environmental harm if not managed carefully.
10. The improvement of people's living conditions remain pre-eminence to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government (KPKT). We aspire to enhance the community well-being and quality of life, serving as a catalyst for the nation's progress.

11. We necessitate thoughtful planning and policies that preserve rural traditions while promoting sustainable development, through the National Physical Plan (NPP), a top-level framework for national development. It sets economic growth targets and guides allocation of resources for urban and rural public sector projects, infrastructure and services planning connects communities, ensuring inclusive and functional territories.
12. The upcoming 5th National Physical Plan (NPP5), which will include East Malaysia (Sabah and Sarawak) and 3rd National Urbanisation Policy (NUP3), emphasising on human-scale planning and community building, aligning with Malaysia's MADANI vision for future cities. Furthermore, we also have regional plans span across multiple states, State Structure Plans and Local Plans address local needs, ensuring that policies from the NPP are effectively implemented at all levels, especially during planning permission stage at local level.
13. Policies related to physical urban and rural planning must be integrated and closely implemented at different stages of our planning hierarchy. To manifest this, the National Rural Physical Planning Policy 2030 was formulated in 2017. Subsequently, it has contributed to the formation of rural planning unit in PLANMalaysia, dedicated to oversee the implementation of Physical Rural Planning and Development at state and local level. In addition to that, the Department of Local Government hosted Kampung Baru (New Villages) Division, focusing on integration of these villages into nation's development plan and visions.

KPKT and KKDW: Strategic Partners and S-CHARMs

14. KPKT is committed to play our role towards ensuring sustainability objectives for both urban and rural areas in Malaysia. This is in accordance with MADANI aspirations. We seek to assist KKDW, complimenting our strategic partner in terms of rural planning through spatial dimensions, and provide solutions with regards to urban-rural linkages issues and challenges.
15. Our main vision is making Smart City as a strategic drive to address key challenges in making cities in Malaysia more productive, competitive, sustainable and liveable. Perhaps we should initiate and adopt Smart Rural as well.
16. Under the provision National Rural Physical Planning Policy 2030, PLANMalaysia have initiated S-CHARMS (System of Spatial Characteristics of Rural Malaysia) in year 2020, which is **an innovative web-based system that integrates spatial data from PLANMalaysia's I-Plan on rural village boundaries and KKDW's National Village Profile System (SPKPN) on rural profiles.**
17. S-CHARMs aims to enhance rural landscapes by providing related information or data and facilitate decision-making process, improve resource allocation, predict future trends, promote engagements with citizen, and many more. Its core functions include interactive GIS mapping, rural planning and decision support analysis, and updating and sharing rural information.

18. It's the first system established in the country that give emphasis on rural spatial information which include village categories, profiles, boundaries, public amenities, and other land use components. **S-CHARMs currently holds data for 19,474 villages** and is accessible to the public and all agencies nationally, regionally, and locally.
19. Through S-CHARMS, we realized that to advance rural planning and development, we must strengthen inter-agency cooperation. We need to engage in discussions, dialogues, and share best practices to find innovative solutions for urban-rural challenges. Hence, we look forward to more collaborations with the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development and other agencies.

National Rural Symposium

20. Consequently, this symposium is the ideal venue for sharing knowledge, nurturing ideas, and forming partnerships from both international and local perspectives. It reflects the core Madani Principles: Sustainability, Care and Compassion, Respect, Innovation, Prosperity, and Trust. These principles are inclusive to all, whether living in urban or rural areas, ensuring no one is left behind.

21. As I conclude my speech, I would like to thank everyone for making this Symposium a reality. Let's seize this moment to inspire change, ignite passion, and create a brighter future for rural communities across the country. Together, we can innovate, promote sustainable development, and make a lasting impact on the lives of those in these communities.
22. As we look to the future, remember the Brundtland Commission's words: "Sustainable development meets today's needs without compromising future generations' ability to meet theirs." With this vision, we can create a smart, sustainable, and inclusive rural Malaysia that thrives now and ensures prosperity for the future. Also, this vision is in line with our tagline:

#Stronger_Together
#Unity_In_Diversity
#Demi_Pertiwi

Thank you.

(1307 words)