

still living in the jungle in their nomadic life-style. The government is committed to providing them the choice of a more settled way of life where they can be given basic services, taught to grow their own food, improve their traditional handicraft skills and instill the sense of responsibility to community and country.

11. It is not my intention to paint an idealistic picture that there are no problems at all in relation to those indigenous people that have left the forests and those that have chosen to stay. There is sweeping modernization being experienced by many countries of South East Asia, including Malaysia. Our people, both immigrant and indigenous, are benefitting to the maximum the fruits of the path we have charted for ourselves to modernize and progress. We do not ape the West, there are many aspects of the relentless pursuits of modernization and unsustainable life-style of the West that we want to have nothing to do with. But selectively and on the basis of our roots and energies, modernize we must in order to compete and thrive. This is our collective national commitment. There is no going back to the idyllic life of yesteryears as that situation perpetuates continued dominance and dependent status on industrialized countries of the North.

12. In the context of the collective will of the nation to progress, there are important issues to be reconciled including the situation of those Malaysians who choose to live in the forests as in the days of the past. The Malaysian government believes that in this regard, we must offer to all, especially to those indigenous people in the forests, the same choice that the rest of us were presented with earlier. We would want those that have not opted to join the mainstream to consider seriously the critical implications involved. There is no attempt to place any group at a disadvantage; there is no coercion. Obviously, economic