There are many interesting implications inherent in the topic of my address to you today: Malaysia: The Future is in Our Hands.

2. The rakyat is reminded that he is master, and that he holds the key to the future of this land.

Ladies and gentlemen,

3. When I say the future is in your hands, I am not referring to the lines on your palm. I am saying the future is in your hands because it is with these hands that you are going to elect the people who will represent your best interest in the government.

Ladies and gentlemen,

4. Some people told me that we are poised on the cusp of change, and the choice that you make is significant, perhaps not so much for you as for your children, grand children and great-grand children. To put it another way, the future of innocent children yet unborn for generations to come is in your hands.

5. In other words, it is not the King who will decide the future for us, it is not what the Prime Ministers want that will be of any consequence. It is not the VVIPs or the so-called political analysts who are going to decide the future of our land. It is you, and here I include the ordinary citizens of the country, meaning the farmer, the teacher, the petty trader, stall keeper, the trishaw puller, the watchman, the bread man and even the unemployed vagrant who is going to decide the destiny of our children.

6. The issue of choice is sacrosanct to human beings who have been endowed with free will. You are born to be free. It is not for the government or the opposition to decide whether you should be free or not. Remember, nobody can dictate your choice unless you let him.

7. Therefore, more sacrosanct than any other day is the day of election. It is a day when you will hold the country's future in your hands. In fact, no other election has been so much talked about and anticipated with as much anxiety and expectations as the forthcoming elections. The coming election appears so important that it may be likened to the 'battle of the century' for our country.

8. There are many Malaysians who complain about the government but are not registered voters. They make loud comments but lack the will to make a difference. They do not commit themselves wholeheartedly to seek change and to exercise their voting rights to choose a better government.

9. Your future is in your hands and if you fail to treasure the right, and exercise the right with wisdom, then you and no one else is to blame for your own destiny. As the Qur'an says in chapter 13, verse 11:

"Truly, God does not change the condition of a people unless they change what is in themselves".

10. Now the next issue is, are we able to exercise our mind with wisdom? Unfortunately, as a people and as a nation, we are not able to do so. We are born free, but our minds have become captive.

11. In our country, the problem of the captive mind has its origins in the race dilemma to an extent that we have become incapable of devising an analytical method independent of current stereotypes about Malays, Chinese, Indians and the others. Our thinking is based completely on a racial world view when it comes to matters of politics, education, economics, planning, and so forth.

12. Needless to say, we promote a racial world view that thrives on the policy of divide and rule.

13. The citizens of the land are exiting the country in large numbers, and the gap is filled, not by people with equivalent skills and potentials, but by unskilled labour from abroad. Public universities have no places for locals, but they are absorbing large numbers of foreign students. It is sad that our own people should be deprived of the benefits of a good education – a resource that has been described as the global currency of 21st century economies.

14. And yet education is seen as the best solution to the economic uncertainties of the times, as it enables our people to compete, collaborate and connect in a way that drives our economies forward.

15. And today, we have the captive mind, the product largely of our education system, which has failed to generate its opposite, the creative mind. The captive mind feeds on trivia and fragmented knowledge, and students are not taught to be philosophical, universal or intercultural.

16. Our educational curricula do not encourage the moral and intellectual reform of the mind. If we look west, we find that the development of education took place as part and parcel of the evolution of society and civilization as a whole. But in our own case, the education system has failed to impart the fundamentals of scientific thinking and reasoning in relation to our own society.

17. Captive minds tend to avoid major issues such as the concept of good governance, meaning of development, the effect of corruption on society and the rule of law.

18. Again, as it stands today, in the area of economy, there is no honest intellectual inquiry to find out why, despite many years of implementing the New Economic Policy, inequitable distribution of income continues to plague the people, and why we are lagging behind countries that do not have as much resources.

19. To this very day, the electorate has not understood the implications of the New Economic Policy which has produced results that are diametrically opposed to the original intention of bridging the gap between the haves and the have-nots. The longer we try the policy, the further we are from the original goal.

20. If the doctor keeps on prescribing the same medicine which produces opposite results, then something must be wrong with the doctor, and something more serious must be wrong with the patient who keeps on trusting the same doctor.

21. Today, the discrepancy between vision and reality has taken on an alarming turn. It has gone far beyond economics into the realm of ethics and morality. In numerous instances it has taken the form of corruption and decadence which has pushed the economy further down the drain.

22. Today, we are saddled with a spiraling national debt brought to exist by wanton corruption and wasteful spending. It is feared that in relation to Singapore which is free of foreign debts, if we are not careful, it won't take us long before we become another Greece. The problem continues to escalate, despite being highlighted by the Auditor General year after year in his annual reports. It has been estimated that we can easily save RM25-30bn without changing any of the deliverables if only we can get rid of corruption and cronyism.

Ladies and gentlemen,

23. Professor Alatas once said that we have different types of governments such as democracy, autocracy, theocracy, and so forth, and now we need to describe our government as one that keeps the people ignorant. According to him, we need to use new terms such as "ignocracy" to describe a government that wants to keep the people ignorant.

24. And yet for a democracy to succeed it is of cardinal importance for us to make informed choices.

Ladies and gentlemen,

25. We have the power to cast away our misfortune by casting our votes for the right candidates. But our captive minds are unable to guide our hands in making the right choices for

our future and the future of our children.

26. When I say that the future is in your hands, it is not merely a reference to your individual role as a voter. I must add that the future is in your hands in a larger collective sense. In those days, the duty to educate and inform was left to educators and writers, as well as the government. Today we can longer trust them to act as purveyors of truth. It has become our responsibility to hold the future in our own hands. In this effort, we are thankful for the new technology which has flung open the doors of democracy, making it easier for us to organize and share information.

27. Therefore, through our efforts at educating and promoting political consciousness, let us hope that the people of this country, in the rural and urban areas alike, will cast away their slumber, and wake up to greet the dawn of a new day, as we did fifty five years ago when the Tunku called this nation into being in the name of God, the Compassionate and the Merciful, a nation that “ever seeks the welfare of its people”.

Thank you.

** Speech by Y.B.M. Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah at the “Road Map For Achieving Vision 2020” Book Launch Ceremony at Syuen Hotel, Ipoh on Sunday, 1st April, 2012*