

# Put more funds in research

I HAVE been listening to some of the discussions on the 14th General Election (GE14) on TV and social media and I think very little is devoted to the issue of how to sustain the nation.

We do face many challenges as a nation but, unfortunately, there have been only sprinkles of discussions on the critical issues, for example the digital revolution which is now shaping up the world. The current global concerns, Industry 4.0, artificial intelligence (AI) and the growing importance of biotechnology in influencing the future of business in agriculture and medicine, have only made brief appearances in the campaigns of all parties. This is not reflective of the mentality required of a developed nation which we are supposed to be by 2020, at least by the GDP per capita that has been used as the sole yardstick.

One global concern that has hogged international headlines is whether the world is truly sustainable. How can the world manoeuvre the many threats facing it?

Our nation is not spared from such threats either. Take the threat of climate change as an example. Whether we realise it or not, the impacts of climate change are going to hit us hard too. Do we know how our agriculture sector, such as oil palm and rubber, will be impacted by higher temperature? Do we know whether our water situation will be adversely affected or not? Is there enough research to develop new breeds of rice which can cope with the changing climate and a reduced supply of water? What about the population in areas which may be submerged by rising sea levels? Do we know which areas are most susceptible to such adversities? Are

we ready with the necessary action to respond to such eventualities?

The general election is, in fact, an excellent opportunity to debate on such issues. It is the best time to create better awareness among the population of such imminent threats to their wellbeing. We should all be made to realise that unless appropriate actions and strategies are put in place, the nation may even be doomed.

We may look at some hints of the actions from the more developed economies of the world. There, the focus is on education and research as their key strategies to manage the impending threats. Most of these countries know that climate change and demographic adjustments may lead to increasing depletion of key resources. And this will give rise to greater competition among the world economies.

That explains why much empha-

sis is directed towards investing in education and research. Education will generate the right talents for the country while research by the competent talent force will produce the right ideas and innovations to raise the nation's competitiveness.

As a nation, we have done much for education. Sadly, however, the funding for research is still minuscule. If we talk about providing subsidies, then education and research should be the top priority, not fuel. In fact, if we want to put the money collected from the GST to good use, then more should be channelled into education and research.

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