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Author(s)	Mohd Roffee Mohamad.; Mohammad Lukman Kamari.
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## Country Report- Radio and Television Malaysia

Submitted by :

Mohd. Roffee Bin Mohamad,

Mohammad Lukman Kamari

### RTM's challenge in Multiracial society

#### 1. Executive Summary

##### 1.1 Background.

With the country heading towards high-end digital technology, particularly in broadcasting, Malaysia started its own Multichannel (DTU) Satellites services since October 1996, operated by ASTRO that now introducing the new set-top box that carries 30 channels with Multimedia services and 11 radio channels.

Radio Television Malaysia (RTM), the National Government Broadcasting Station which operates two television channels and six radio networks, 22 regional stations over 90% coverage nationwide with the population of 22 millions, and an overseas short-wave service in six languages.

Beside the satellite services and government channels, to provide a wide range of content for 10,436,000 TV sets, there are other two terrestrial TV stations and 1 cable using MMDS in operation.

And to satisfy 10,308,000 listeners, there are other commercial radio stations such as Time Highway Radio, Best 104, Radio Rediffusion, AMP Radio Networks (5) and CATS Radio are providing a wide variety of programming.

##### 1.2 Corporatisation of RTM

The Cabinet has agreed to corporatize RTM with the view to make the organization more efficient and competitive in facing the challenges of the new millenium. Seven working committees are responsible to look into issues relating to organization structure, financial structure and capital injection, personal matters, legal matters, assets and liabilities, business and statutory activity, and development are currently speed-up collecting inputs for the preparation of documentation in particularly the "Successor Company Act" which has to be passed by the Parliament. It is envisaged that corporatization of RTM will be materialized by the year end of 2000.

#### 2. "Role that can never be change!"

For the past 54 years, RTM has grown in its role, mission and vision in fulfilling its gigantic task of developing and enhancing a young and independent nation. As a Public

Service Broadcasting organization, RTM's objective has been complementing and accomplishing the country's growth and progress.

RTM is concerned with the various community roles it plays. It is state-owned, but earning licensing fees and profiting from its advertising revenues. It has always been fulfilling its roles of entertaining, informing, and educating the communities with its slogan - MEMO. That is, the primary objective of delivering its message (ME) and secondary role of money making (MO). Unlike its rival terrestrial broadcasting stations, TV3 and NTV 7, whose main objective are maximising profits, RTM on the other hand is constantly concerned with the country's National Development Policy (e.g. Five Year Plan), disseminating the information necessary for the progress and growth of its people.

Malaysia is a multiracial, multilingual, multicultural and multi-religious society with its 4 main races, Malays- (12 million,) Chinese- (5million), Indians -(a million,) other indigenous races - of Sabah Sarawak - (3 million.)

Because of these diversities RTM's primary concern focuses on harmony and unity. RTM's prime channel that is TV1 broadcasts only in the Malay Language. While TV 2 the golden channel, broadcasts in the other various languages.

**Data 1** (% of languages of various Programs in TV 1)

No	Language	Hours Per Week	% Per week
1.	Malay	115.5	95.06
2.	English	4.5	3.70
3.	Indonesian	1	0.83
4.	Arabic	0.5	0.41
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>121.5</b>	<b>100</b>

**Data 1A** (% of languages of various Programs in TV 2)

No	Language	Hours Per Week	% Per week
1.	English	43	47.00
2.	Chinese	28.5	31.14
3.	Malay	10	10.93
4.	Tamil/Hindi	10	10.93
<b>Total</b>		<b>121.5</b>	<b>100</b>

In radio, while Malay is its national language, there are other stations designed specifically for the different races and interest groups.

**Data 2**

Radio Channel	Language
R1	Malay
R2 (Music)	Malay & English
R3 (KL)	
R4	English
R5	Chinese
R6	Tamil
R7	Aboriginal

Another 22 regional stations are in Malay and in the ethnic languages of the various states.

The different channels broadcasting in the different languages and dialects (ethnic) have the same goals, same aspirations, and same messages that is in line with the National Development Policy.

The difference is the means. City Radio (Radio KL) currently teaches languages to the different races, Mandarin and Cantonese for non-Chinese speakers. Tamil for Malays and Chinese listeners, and Arabic for some interest groups.

**Data 3 (Learning other Languages over City Radio)**

City Radio (Radio KL)	Language
	Mandarin
	Cantonese
	Tamil
	Arabic
	Japanese
	French
	Thai
	German

City Radio (Radio KL) alternately teaches Japanese, French, Arabic, Thai, and German in an easy and fun manner and is popularly accepted by the listeners. RTM thus caters to the needs of the different races.

The Federal Constitution states, " *Every person has the right to profess and practice his religion* " yet, we are always sensitive to the needs and taboos of the different races. During festivities, be it Chinese New Year, Muslim festivals, Deepavali (for the Indians)

and even during Christmas, Malaysians will tolerate, appreciate and celebrate the festivity and ways of others.

The media, especially RTM will highlight the joyous occasions in its documentaries, features, talk-shows, entertainment programs, children's hour, even local dramas are all aimed at instilling civic consciousness, in line with the nation's objectives of promoting national integration.

The various networks will allocate most of their prime time telecast hour airing special local and foreign productions of a particular festival.

Even its news coverage, are strictly on the spirit and glory of the auspicious occasion intersperse with good values, honesty, sincerity and good neighborliness. Everyone from all walks of life, will celebrate the other race's festivity as though its theirs, enjoying the different delicacies, and respecting the others do's and don'ts (for example one will not put on black on Chinese new year when visiting the Chinese friends. To the Chinese red is a symbol of prosperity and black of mourning (one will use black or dark colored clothes during funerals) Another example is not to serve beef when inviting Hindu friends is the cow is their sacred animal.)

RTM will line programs to reflect national aspirations, conforming to the principles of the 5 pillars of the Rukunegara. The Rukunegara is the Malaysian ideology with 5 principles drawn up as an aftermath of the racial riots in 1969. It serves as a guiding factor, which should be adhered to. A council whose members were selected drew it from various ethnic groups has proven that the Rukunegara is a valid and viable guide for racial harmony and integration which is meant to build a united Malaysian nation and safeguard national security.

In line with the Ministry of Information's target that by this year, RTM's program content must be 80 % local and 20 % global. Local programs will continue to depict its multiracial society, all reflected in its lined-up of interviewees, guests, personalities, hosts, local talents in its local setting.

In all its programs, be it comedy series or topics of serious issues, rules have been set (since 1969) and carried through, the media- (print or electronic) will avoid sensitive issues pertaining to race, culture, religion that may downgrade, humiliate, condemns any other races of the country. RTM will continue to provide avenues for the people's views and voice not just to enhance authenticity and credibility but to bring the people closer to themselves and the government.

As a public service broadcaster it constantly reminds, promotes on the positive aspect of competition by all, socially, economically or politically. Malaysians will continue to co-exist and respect one other.

Issues of intermarriages between 2 races, 2 religions and its challenges, has always interest the audience (radio/TV alike). We constantly welcome ideas to support racial tolerance and understanding.

Audience tolerance is the key factor in the daily formulation of TV network scheduling. In spite of the multiracial, multilingual, multicultural society, the society's differences have never been raised. In fact differences are highlighted positively - to the benefit of others, enabling the population to respect and propagate inter-racial cultural practices and beliefs. An example is the exchange of money packets during Chinese and the Muslim New Year. This is always being looked forward to by the young and sighed by the elderly, but nonetheless a culture practiced with an air of pride.

RTM's Local productions are always highlighting the different ethnic groups' cultural practices and commitments aimed at maximizing understanding and of course for the benefit of all, be they citizens or visitors to Malaysia.

Malaysian society has been able to accept and co-exist. Feelings of inadequacy or suspicious have to be wiped out for Malaysians rely on one another be it in economic or social interactions.

During pre and post independence years (1957) each race has been identified with its own form of economic activity e.g. - Chinese in mining and business, Indians in rubber estates and railway lines while the Malays are in the rural areas of padi planting or the civil service. With the government's New Economic Policy of the 5 year Malaysia plan such segregation have been minimized and Malaysians are no longer identified by such occupations as stressed by the Prime Minister of Malaysia in 1997 at the National Congress

..."Malaysians of all colors and creeds are free to practice and profess their customs, cultures and religious beliefs and yet feel that they belong to one nation".

Malaysian Society has moved for the better, with its economic and political stability. Such has been the role played by RTM, encouraging the communities to co-exist, respect and understand one another for the benefit of society at large. RTM uses its medium to suit the needs and requirements of national culture and satisfy the diversified tastes of her audience and also bring the aborigines (50 ethnic groups in all) into the mainstream of national development for national integration.

It is indeed a great challenge to RTM because no one ethnic group or race will be easily pleased with the only public service broadcast organization whose role will continue to please every one irrespective of creed or belief.

Quote from the PM Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamed at the National Congress Vision 2020 in 1997.

First of the nine strategic challenges of Vision 2020.

**"Establish a united Malaysian Nation with a sense of common and shared destiny. A nation at peace with itself, territorially and ethnically integrated, living in harmony full and fair partnership, made up of "bangsa Malaysia with political loyalty and dedication to the nation "**

Ref :  
Deputy Director General (Programme),  
ABU Engineering Committee,  
and  
Secretariat (International Affair)  
Radio Television Malaysia.