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Prof. Han Chung Kwang obtained the PhD from the University of Cambridge. He is a senior professor (VK6), Faculty of Economics and Management, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), and honorary professor at Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman 2004-2010. He was the founding president of Management Science/ Operations Research Society of Malaysia, and founding president of Customer Relationship Management and Contact Centre Association of Malaysia. His managerial experiences included a two-year secondment to the senior management team at the Multimedia Development Corporation. At UPM, he has served as director of Centre for Research on Information Management and Policy Action and director of Electronic University.

Talk 6: Soft OR and National Transformation Programmes in an Asian Country

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Abstract:

When Barack Obama campaigned and re-campaigning for the presidency of America, his slogan has been a simple “Change we need”. In an Asian country, “Transformation” has been a recurring pervasive nametag to all public- and private-sector initiatives since the mid-1990s. But in the last two years, the Government has been taking a radically new approach at the level of national transformation. The Government Transformation Programme was initiated in 2009, followed by the New Economic Model and Economic Transformation Programme in 2010, and subsequently political and rural transformation. The “Transformation Budget 2012” announced the “National Transformation Policy”.

Presently, transformation can be perceived as the inception stage as the various programmes would be undergoing a continuous journey to 2020. In order to make a real significant change to the country, the transformation needs to be driven from a synthesis of economic, managerial, organizational, social and technological dimensions at the multiple levels of the individual, organization, industry, government, society and the nation. We provide another way of seeing and doing transformation from an enhanced Soft Operations Research (Soft OR) Model in critical practice. Critical practice is an iterative reflexive process, firstly by developing knowledge-for-understanding from a sophisticated Soft OR model of reality. Secondly, a critique of underpinning assumptions and presumptions whereby the constraining conditions of the status quo and emancipation become knowable and explicit, that is, knowledge-for-evaluation. Finally, recreate, redefine, redesign, reimagine and reinvent the pragmatic, doable and implementable programmes from knowledge-for-action. The Soft OR Model expands the national transformation underlying concept of “Being and Doing” whereby Yin meets Yang in the transformation programmes to convert the Asian developing country into a high-income developed country by 2020.