

SPEECH



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8TH ASEAN LEADERSHIP FORUM: "TRANSFORMING ASEAN - THE WAY FORWARD"

(Speech by Dato' Sri Mohd Najib Bin Tun Hj. Abdul Razak, Prime Minister of Malaysia at Nikko Hotel Jakarta, Indonesia)

I am delighted to join you all at the 8th ASEAN Leadership Forum in Jakarta – and I would like to thank your Chairman, Bapak Aburizal Bakrie, and the Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute for inviting me to deliver today's address on "Transforming ASEAN". At last year's forum in Kuala Lumpur I was humbled to accept the Inaugural ASEAN Transformational Leader Award, presented to those who are seeking to drive change within their countries.

When I spoke with you last year I said that to see real change across all of our ten countries we would need genuinely transformational leadership. I would like to develop these thoughts with you today. Let us start with the basics: what do we mean by transformation? This may seem like a very simple question, but I think it's one worth asking. People often make the mistake of thinking about transformation as changing something so drastically from its original form that its inherent values, its defining characteristics, and its essence gets lost along the way. But in reality it doesn't work like that. Genuine transformation is about taking something good, and turning it into something even better – a process that throughout history has been propelled by the stewardship, the wisdom and the vision of great leaders. Pericles, for example, transformed Athens after the ravages of the Persian Wars into a city that nourished the thought of Socrates, the writings of Sophocles and the architecture of the Acropolis. Mahatma Gandhi transformed not just his own country, India, but people and leaders across the

world over through his spirit, his magnanimity and his deep-rooted commitment to peace. Or take a more mundane example, but one that is still very close to my heart: Sir Alex Ferguson! The manager of my favorite football team, Manchester United, has presided over 24 years of silverware, but he has not done it simply by standing still. He has constantly changed with the times, and today he is revered as one of the greatest, if not the greatest, managers of all time. I am certainly hoping for the best for tonight's defining game against Chelsea. But what all of these leaders, and all of the great leaders throughout the ages, have shared is arrestless energy, a deep-rooted sense of purpose and an unwavering commitment to their cause.

They have in common a faith in the power of possibility, in our ability to change things for the better – and it is for each of us to show that faith today. It will not be easy. There are many entrenched and enduring challenges that, together, we must face. More than three years after we felt its worst effects, the world is still being buffeted by the aftermath of the first truly global economic storm. We are still too often confronted by the evils of terrorism and by those who would seek to destroy our values to undermine our peaceful way of life. And we are all facing the dangers posed by climate change – each and every one of us, in this generation and the next. But while we must confront these issues at a global level, at a regional level it is equally important that we address the questions facing ASEAN. Questions like: How to invest in skills and talent so that we will see well-educated work forces becoming world class? How best to meet the aspirations of our people to increase their standard of living and ensure their incomes rise? And how to make that difficult transition from “developing” nation to “developed”? These are gigantic goals, but if we achieve them our prize will be a social and cultural florescence to match that of the *rafflesia arnoldii* – the largest flower in the world, which grow in both Indonesia and Malaysia. That might sound poetic, but in practice it is going to take all of the mechanics of Government and the full force of forums such as this one to drive those changes through.

That is why in Malaysia we have set about addressing these challenges through the Government Transformation Programme, the Economic

Transformation Programme and the New Economic Model. It is because we need to change, to embrace change, to drive and re-energise Malaysia's economy and build a better future for all our people. I want to create 3.3 million new jobs, not just any job but high value jobs, increase per capita income four-fold and encourage USD 3.3 trillion of new investments by 2020. And I want to continue to liberalize our economy – for a modern economy will never thrive if it seeks shelter or swims in the shallows. Quite the opposite: a modern economy has to brave the deep waters and the oceans that connect the world. These are not small goals – all those “want, want, wants” might sound little bit demanding – but it is only through resolve and maybe even a degree of stubbornness that we will transform these radical ideas from mere wishes to tangible realities, in our countries and right across our region. I am incredibly proud of ASEAN – and it is our job, together, to realize the Association's potential and to share it with the world. Because whilst every individual nation must take its own steps, there are some leaps we have to make together. To that end, I believe we must now focus our collective efforts on three key areas. First, we must continue to make social progress – ensuring that our societies believe in the change that is all around them, that they feel part of that change and that they have faith in their ability to drive it themselves. One of the initiatives of which I have been proudest as Prime Minister is the introduction of 1Malaysia as a new national banner behind which all Malaysians can unite. And I believe we could inspire in our peoples and our nations a stronger sense of ASEAN consciousness through a similar, 1ASEAN concept. Imagine if when we introduced ourselves to someone from the UK or from France, we said we were not just Malaysian or Indonesian, we are Asean – just like they might say they are from Europe. Because I am proud to be from South East Asia. I want our people to feel proud too – and I want the whole world to know who we are! Second, we must continue to develop – driving economic growth, opening us up to investment and increasing opportunity. But we must also ensure that growth is driven by good governance. And that leads me to the third point – because we will need good governance, transparency and accountability to take us forward and to drive the change we need. But, our region is fast becoming

one of the most dynamic and successful in the world. The ASEAN-China Free Trade Agreement is the third largest of its kind and covers nearly a third of the global population. And whilst Western economies are still struggling to overcome the economic crisis and to regain their global dominance, ASEAN is making great strides forward. Trade between ASEAN and China for the first 8 months of last year was 185.4 billion US dollars, 47 percent higher than the volume for the same period of 2009. So we are a region of profound potential and we should aspire to do more. We should aspire to rival Europe, to rival even some of the best of the world, such as China and the United States. I have no doubt that under the astute leadership of H.E. President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and the Indonesian Chairmanship, our region will continue to grow in stature within the world economy. So once again, let me thank the Government of Indonesia for their hospitality in hosting the 18th ASEAN Summit. Let me also thank the ASEAN Secretariat, KADIN and ASLI for organizing today's event. I wish all of you a successful Forum.

