

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY
YAB DATO' SRI MOHD. NAJIB BIN TUN HAJI ABDUL RAZAK
PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA**

**31ST ASIA-PACIFIC ROUNDTABLE
THE FUTURE OF THE ASIA PACIFIC:
ISSUES AND INSTITUTIONS IN FLUX**

**22 MAY 2017
GRAND BALLROOM, LEVEL 6, HILTON KUALA LUMPUR**

**DELIVERED BY
YB DATO' SRI HAJAH NANCY SHUKRI
MINISTER IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT**

- 1. YANG BERBAHAGIA TAN SRI RASTAM MOHD ISA**
Chairperson, ASEAN Institutes of Strategic and International Studies (ASEAN-ISIS), and Chairman and Chief Executive, Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia;
2. Excellencies;
3. Distinguished speakers and participants;
4. Members of the Media;
5. Ladies and gentlemen.

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim

Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh

1. First and foremost, on behalf of Yang Amat Berhormat Dato' Sri Mohd. Najib Bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak, Prime Minister of Malaysia, I would like to convey Yang Amat Berhormat's sincere apologies for not being able to be here to personally deliver this speech tonight. Yang Amat Berhormat sends his best wishes to the speakers, participants, organisers as well as all the attendees of this conference.
2. Please allow me to deliver Yang Amat Berhormat's speech:
3. I would like to welcome all speakers and participants to the 31st Asia-Pacific Roundtable (APR) – an event of the region's leading innovative and strategic thinkers. Many of you have flown long hours and distances to be here. For those of you who are in Kuala Lumpur for the first time, I bid you a warm welcome. For the frequent visitors among you, welcome back.
4. My congratulations go to ISIS Malaysia and the ASEAN-ISIS network for convening this year's edition of the APR. These are certainly interesting times we live in. I understand that over the next two days, you will deliberate some of the systemic shocks we have witnessed in the past year as well as those we will try to anticipate in the coming years.

5. As we, in government, ride these waves of change, we recognise that the strength and value of Track Two discussions like the APR lie in the candour that leaders and ministers are not always afforded. This frankness allows for unvarnished analyses that governments like ours in Malaysia appreciate and will continue to rely on.

Ladies and gentlemen,

6. Since I last addressed you, there have been a number of significant developments on the global political scene that reverberate to this day and throughout this region. The United States elected a new President amid hackings, leaks and accusations. The United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union after 44 years of membership.
7. And just recently, tensions reached new heights in and around the Korean peninsula. Even Malaysia became unwittingly embroiled in an international incident when Kim Jong Nam was killed by assailants using a chemical nerve agent on our soil. It seems that the era of big power politics is well and truly back.

Ladies and gentlemen,

8. One of the most profound and under-estimated phenomena that has manifested itself in recent times has been the popular groundswell of disillusionment over the failed promises of globalisation. This discontent did not develop just over the past year. It has been rising for many years, fuelled by economic disparity, social marginalisation, and political disenfranchisement.

9. In parts of the world, this bitterness has translated into intolerance, bigotry and xenophobia.
10. The lessons we can draw from the experience of those countries are important for us in Southeast Asia. A state is only as strong as the prosperity and security of its people. This is why, as we in ASEAN look forward to celebrating our golden jubilee later this year, we affirm our commitment to our people, to their well-being, and to their aspirations.
11. We acknowledge that even if all ten ASEAN member states have had remarkable success in keeping the peace among ourselves over the last 50 years, we will be judged more by what we do to improve the lives of our citizens over the next 50 years and beyond.
12. Of the more than 620 million people in ASEAN, nearly 400 million are youths. As the young people take over the leadership reins in the next decades, what will matter to them is that we in this generation did our best to enrich the lives of the small-scale and medium-scale entrepreneurs, improve connectivity, support all parts and every sector of our societies, empower women and the marginalised, and ensure that the growth we are forging is inclusive and sustainable – so that none of our citizens are left behind, and their future is built on sturdy and lasting foundations. The vision of a people-oriented and people-centred ASEAN has to become a reality from now.

Ladies and gentlemen,

13. As ASEAN celebrates its 50th anniversary, it is only natural that it will continue to have its critics. ASEAN has and will continue to take feedback on board in order to grow from strength to strength.
14. It has, after all, begun implementing reforms to strengthen the ASEAN Secretariat and, under the leadership of the Philippines this year, it has shown flexibility in varying the format of the ASEAN + 1 Summits and Post-Ministerial Conferences to ensure greater substantive interaction.
15. But make no mistake. ASEAN also has its champions and rightly so. For despite its constraints, ASEAN has marked many achievements it can be proud of. This is an organisation that with all its faultlines could have gone the way of separation and conflict a long time ago, but has instead underscored community, consensus-building and connectivity.
16. This is an organisation that has achieved a total trade of nearly USD1 trillion in under a decade from the mid-2000s and that has attracted more than USD130 billion in foreign direct investment, representing more than 10 percent in global FDI inflows.
17. This is an organisation that counts major global and regional powers as its Dialogue Partners, countries from further afield as its Sectoral Dialogue Partners and Development Partners, and that has the good fortune of considering applications for membership rather than for withdrawal.

18. Crucially, this is an organisation that looks to the future rather than the past. ASEAN has proven as serious about tackling the numerous traditional security issues endemic to the region, such as terrorism and maritime insecurity, as it is about grappling with newer, evolving threats such as those in cyber space.
19. That is not to say there is not much more to be done. There certainly is. But we should note the progress that has been made. And we should note that the ASEAN way of a loose, informal understanding among neighbours is evolving into a more institutionalised, rules-based structure, so that it remains bound together in values and in law even in the face of change.
20. There is no doubt that ASEAN will continue to reinvent itself as challenges - and there will be many - present themselves. That will provide the strength for the enhancement of the ASEAN Community.
21. The desire for ASEAN unity is shared, but it must never be taken for granted. As the larger powers around us jostle and settle into a “new normal” of relations, ASEAN’s role should be to provide stability and a platform for constructive dialogue.

Ladies and gentlemen,

22. The theme of this conference is “Issues and Institutions in flux”, and you have heard me speak about the example ASEAN has provided during decades of flux. I have no doubt it will continue to do so as the tectonic plates of geopolitics shift in the future.
23. One of the reasons Malaysia has always been at the forefront of ASEAN is that our values and nature coincide. This country is also

an example of stability and moderation, open to friendship with all, in keeping with our history as a seafaring, trading nation; a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious nation, friendly to all and enemy of none.

24. Indeed, rather than acting out of pique and perpetuating old grievances, as sometimes happened in the past, one of the hallmarks of Malaysia's foreign policy under my Government has been the forging of new bonds in the region and beyond, and the strengthening of ties with old friends.
25. This Government has signed Comprehensive and Strategic Partnerships with a number of countries, including the United States, China and India. We welcome friendship and cooperation and the pursuit of legitimate interests.
26. In the last year alone there have been so many meetings, including with heads of government and heads of state of the ASEAN countries, of America, China, India, Saudi Arabia, Turkmenistan, Iran, France, Germany, and most recently Bahrain. Just last week there was the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in Beijing.
27. These interactions and agreements have concrete results in terms of trade and jobs, such as the RM144 billion investment by China in Malaysia, Saudi Aramco's RM31 billion investment in Petronas's Refinery and Petrochemical Integrated Development in Johor, and the RM159 billion investment and economic cooperation deals agreed with India.

28. At the peak of construction, the Petronas project in Johor alone will create up to 60 thousand new jobs – and neither that, nor China’s or India’s investment, will lead to Malaysia giving up an inch of sovereignty, as anyone with the slightest grasp of economics will be aware.
29. Malaysia remains a highly attractive investment destination. Despite the challenging economic climate, in 2017 we anticipate continued growth in FDIs from the RM41 billion we received last year. The Government’s transformation programmes have clearly borne fruit and we will continue to adapt and adjust in keeping with our national needs and the external environment around us.
30. Ours is a foreign policy that is at the service of, and which benefits, the *rakyat* of Malaysia, while also contributing to the progress of our nation through cooperation with our friends and partners.
31. This approach – of being open, of extending the hand of friendship, of being willing to work with others – has benefits in terms of security as well. Malaysia has facilitated peace talks in both Thailand and the Philippines, which, given our proximity, makes both Malaysia, as well as our two neighbours, safer.
32. With different sets of neighbours, we have joint patrols in the Straits of Malacca and now in the Sulu Sea as well. And it is Malaysia’s practice of moderation and cooperation that made us a natural fit for the establishment of the Regional Digital Counter-Messaging Communication Centre.

33. With the diminishing of Daesh's so-called caliphate, this centre will be all the more important, as we know Southeast Asia faces a small but significant number of radicalised fighters fleeing West Asia and returning home.

Ladies and gentlemen,

34. As we approach the 60th anniversary of Malaysia's independence, it is fitting as a maturing nation that we should practise a steadfast, reliable and open foreign policy, one that concentrates on the well-being of the people rather than harping on past quarrels. This brings other benefits too.
35. For this is how Malaysia and Singapore came to a win-win solution to the Points of Agreement on Malayan Railway Land in Singapore, and have now signed an agreement for the High Speed Rail Link between our two capitals - which will bring the journey time down to only 90 minutes.
36. The reliance that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia knows they can place on us has also been recognised by the establishment of the King Salman Centre for International Peace in Malaysia, and has resulted in the raising of the Malaysian Hajj quota to 30,200 pilgrims.
37. And it is this new foreign policy that this Government has forged that allowed us to succeed in the negotiations with Ukrainian separatists to retrieve the black box from MH17 and to ensure the smooth repatriation of the remains of the victims including 43

Malaysian victims. Our pragmatic approach has also helped in the resolution of the issues involving North Korea recently.

38. Malaysia's status as a trusted interlocutor and leader in the international community was also demonstrated in our successful two-year term on the United Nations Security Council, and in the convening power we brought to the issue of the Rohingya, when at our initiation, the OIC's foreign ministers gathered here in Kuala Lumpur for an extraordinary meeting.

Ladies and gentlemen,

39. I have outlined some ways in which ASEAN and Malaysia have charted successful courses through issues and institutions in flux in the past. I know that your deliberations over the next couple of days will be invaluable for how we in the Asia Pacific manage the challenges we face now and in the future.
40. I wish you every success, and look forward to hearing full reports about what I know will be stimulating and, I hope, free and frank, discussions.

Thank you.

Wabillahi taufik walhidayah, wassalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh