

SPEECH BY
YAB DATO' SRI MOHD NAJIB BIN TUN ABDUL RAZAK
PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA
OCCASION
OPENING CEREMONY NINTH SESSION OF THE WORLD URBAN FORUM (WUF9)
TIME AND DATE
AT 08TH FEBRUARY 2018 (THURSDAY) 3.30 PM
VENUE
PLENARY HALL, KLCC
KUALA LUMPUR

BismillahirRahmanirRahim,

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh

A very good evening and Salam 1 Malaysia,

The Honourable Secretary General of the United Nations,
His Excellency António Guterres;

The Honourable Dato' Maimunah Shariff,
Executive Director, UN Habitat;

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen.

1. I am delighted to be with you all here for the 9th Session of the World Urban Forum in Kuala Lumpur. I am pleased to see such a large presence of foreign delegations coming from 193 countries all around the world.
2. On behalf of the Government and the people of Malaysia, let me welcome you to our beautiful country and to this prestigious forum, the first time it has been held in Malaysia and the second time in Asia since its inception in 2002.
3. We are glad to host WUF 9 together with UN-Habitat – and let me take this opportunity to personally congratulate Dato' Maimunah Sharif on her appointment as the Executive Director of UN-Habitat.
4. We are all proud that a Malaysian public official has been elected to head such an esteemed global organisation, and we wish her well in her new role.

Ladies and gentlemen,

5. As highlighted in the New Urban Agenda adopted at Quito in 2016, the world's urban population is expected to almost double by 2050, with cities hosting close to 70 percent of the globe's population.
6. This growth will be concentrated mainly in Asia and Africa, with Asia projected to have more than half of the world's mega cities.
7. Our experience in Malaysia reflects those trends, as we had an urbanisation rate of under 30 percent in the 1970s, yet today that figure is already over 75 percent, and is expected to exceed 85 percent by 2050.
8. As in many parts of the world, we face the challenges of successfully managing such a massive urban transformation.

9. We are helped by the fact that our economic fundamentals are strong, and the Economic Transformation Programme my Government put in place in 2010 has delivered 2.26 million jobs, over 1 million of which were high income jobs.
10. Inflation and unemployment have been kept low. We have brought the deficit down from 6.7 percent in 2009 to 3 percent last year. Thanks to strong, pro-active measures, we recovered quickly from the global crisis of 2008 to 2009, and we have had years of healthy growth.
11. The World Bank reports that “the Malaysian economy is progressing from a position of strength”, which puts us in a good place as we formulate our National Transformation 2050 – or TN50 – initiative.
12. As we move from being a developing country to becoming a high income economy, our next aim is to become one of the top 20 leading nations of the world by 2050.
13. However, in this mission we will not forsake our values. We seek a just, inclusive and sustainable society in which no Malaysian is left behind.
14. On that note, may I mention that in the World Economic Forum’s latest report, Malaysia was ranked first out of all Asian emerging economies for inclusiveness, and that is a record of which all Malaysians can be proud.
15. We have put in place an extensive range of programmes to provide hundreds of thousands of affordable houses; assistance to those on low incomes; very cheap medical care through our 1Malaysia clinics; exemptions to our Goods and Services Tax for essential food items; training courses and initiatives; and incentives for businesses, especially the SMEs that are the backbone of our economy.
16. For although our cities are known and loved across the globe – Kuala Lumpur was the world’s tenth most visited city last year, for instance, and came sixth on the World’s Best places to retire list, while George Town came tenth – we must ensure that Malaysians living in our cities enjoy a good quality of life that is sustainable for future generations.
17. This is why we have been investing in public transport, such as the new Mass Rapid Transit or MRT lines in the Klang Valley, and the Rapid Transit System which Prime Minister Lee and I have agreed will link Johor Baru and Singapore.
18. This was an area that was neglected in the past, as too much emphasis was placed on the car industry. But our cities need to be liveable. And they need to be sustainable too.
19. This is why I am proud that we have launched projects such as the River of Life, which will clean up and beautify the Klang and Gombak rivers, improving the environment and generating jobs and growth at the same time.
20. Our cities need to be places where young people can thrive as well, which is why we have embarked on the 1Malaysia Youth Cities project.
21. Under this, the Government has allocated RM100 million to finance three projects in three cities, namely, Tanjung Malim in Perak, Tuaran in Sabah and Lundu in Sarawak.
22. Leveraging on existing public infrastructure and facilities, and cooperating with Government Linked Companies and the private sector, these projects will create a comprehensive ecosystem for youths to develop their employability, their skills, and their entrepreneurial edge – all while enjoying recreational facilities, affordable housing, transportation and environmental harmony.

23. Our approach throughout has been holistic. We are proud to have launched the first Digital Free Trade Zone outside China last year, and delighted that over 1900 SMEs have already signed up to this platform of opportunity.
24. At the same time, we want all to share from the digital economy and the enhanced connectivity it offers, which is why we have set a target of achieving 95 percent broadband coverage by the year 2020, and 100 percent coverage by 2040.

Ladies and gentlemen,

25. There is much more I could tell you about how we in Malaysia have direct experience of implementing the commitments in the New Urban Agenda, involving social inclusion, sustainability, ending poverty, and ensuring resilient urban development that benefits all.
26. But you have a busy programme – and my brief is to be brief!
27. So before I conclude I would like to record my appreciation to the United Nations and to UN-Habitat for choosing Kuala Lumpur as the venue for this forum.
28. I thank the Minister for Urban Wellbeing, Housing and Local Government, Tan Sri Noh Omar, and his team of dedicated officers who have put their time and efforts into coordinating with the UN-Habitat team to make this forum happen.
29. And my thanks to all who will be participating in the various dialogues, special sessions and exhibitions over the next seven days.
30. I wish all of you a productive and memorable time here in Kuala Lumpur, and with that, I am delighted to declare the 9th World Urban Forum officially open.

Thank You.

