

THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S 2019 NEW YEAR MESSAGE

"TOWARDS A MORE PEACEFUL, FAIR, AND PROSPEROUS WORLD"

May 9th 2018 manifested a New Malaysia, a peace-loving, harmonious multi-racial and multi-religious nation that upholds democracy, freedom, human rights and the rule of law. Its aspirations are reflected in New Malaysia's Foreign Policy Framework, change in continuity, where maintaining national security, nurturing growth, and reflecting the values of the Rakyat are the pillars of our foreign policy.

The New Malaysia is now ready to play a more active role in global affairs, in making the world more peaceful, fair and prosperous. To achieve this, Wisma Putra will actively participate on the world's stage, through international organizations like the UN, OIC, ASEAN and other groups that influence international laws, conventions, and rules.

We can do this in several ways. In organisations where we are already members, we will participate by making decisions, leading discussions and sponsoring resolutions. Where we are not yet members, we will push to influence decisions, and shape the discourse on emerging issues where we have cultivated local expertise. Such participation is especially important where Malaysia must synergize and cooperate with other nations on common issues like regional peace, and achieving shared prosperity.

One such issue is the South China Sea, which concerns the security and sustenance of many neighboring nations. Should it remain an area of peace, friendship and trade; rather than one of confrontation and conflict, ASEAN and the rest of the world can leverage on our strategic location and each ASEAN member's economic advantage.

New Malaysia will also use its voice to cultivate intra-ASEAN trade. This is in line with our philosophy "Prosper Thy Neighbor". We believe that by developing indigenous capacities, we as a region can strengthen our common market of 640 million people and ultimately transform ASEAN into a production hub - not just for ourselves, but also for the global market, bringing shared prosperity to all.

But in order to play an active role internationally, Malaysia must be a model in ensuring stability at home and setting an example for democratic and economic development for other like-minded nations. We cannot be effective if our policies abroad contradict the expectations and realities at home. Foreign Policy begins at home.

As a multi-racial and multi-religious nation, the unity of our diverse population is our trademark. Our strength.

The Federal Constitution should be interpreted and implemented with wisdom, taking into consideration the historical background, the social contract, and the best options for governing the nation. For example, as the religion of the Federation, Islam should be given a

progressive interpretation, as it is "a mercy to all (Muslims and non-Muslims alike)" (al-Anbiya:107). Because if Allah so willed, "He could have made you all one people" (an-Nahl:93). But Allah "have created you from male and female, and made you peoples and tribes that you may know each other (not that you may despise each other)" (al-Hujurat:13).

Even in dispute, "let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to piety" (al-Maidah:8). The noble Prophet urged Muslims to "avoid extremism, for the people before you were led to destruction because of their extremism in religion".

The theme of this New Year's message, "Towards a more Peaceful, Fair & Prosperous World" is an ongoing cornerstone of our mission. Together, may we make 2019 a year of further deepening the democratisation and reform process, and strengthening unity of Malaysians in steering economic growth and development, and realising a New Malaysia that is filled with peace, prosperity and happiness.

Terima Kasih.

PUTRAJAYA
1 January 2019