

Umno's struggle doesn't end with Vision 2020, says Najib
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UMNO AGM Umno's struggle will not end with the realisation of the goals of Vision 2020 but will continue until Malaysia is ranked among the top 10 most competitive countries in the world by 2030, said Umno president Najib Abdul Razak.

He said the nation has leapt to 18th spot among 144 economies in the Global Competitiveness Report 2015-2016 by the World Economic Forum.

"We can be proud of examples of projects undertaken by Malays like the construction of the offshore gas platform in the Caspian Sea, the management of Istanbul's second international airport and the shale gas project in Canada, that country's largest foreign direct investment," he said in his speech when opening the 2015 Umno general assembly in Kuala Lumpur today.

Najib, who is also prime minister, attributed two other achievements by Malays - IHH Healthcare Bhd as the world's second largest healthcare provider, and the operation and maintenance of the Makkah Metro station - to Umno's struggles.

"From being a rural settlement, no one could have foreseen that we would grow and emerge as a star of the East that shines brightly not only in this region but also globally," he said.

Umno, the party that has led the Barisan Nasional coalition that has governed Malaysia for decades, has also proved its worth in upholding the pride of our beloved country, he stressed.

It is thus not possible for people to claim that Malaysia is a failed state or a beggar under his leadership, he said, adding that the fall in the ringgit's value is not due to mismanagement of the nation's economy but to external factors.

"These include the fall in oil and commodity prices, moderation in China's economic growth, and the expected interest rate hike in the United States.

"All these external factors have been acknowledged by the world as being the cause behind the economic slowdown not only in Malaysia but also most other developing economies," he explained.

In fact, he said, countries like New Zealand and Australia have also been severely affected.

On another matter, he said the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), although unpopular, was an appropriate action that has protected the people from having to face a heavier burden.

“Before 2015, 31 percent of the nation’s revenue came from oil, but with global crude oil prices expected to remain low, the government’s revenue is expected to be reduced by about RM30 billion,” said Najib.

If this happens, international ratings agencies like Standard & Poor’s and Fitch Ratings would downgrade the nation’s credit rating, leading to a surge in interest rates for personal, housing and business loans, which in turn would negatively affect the economy, investment and job opportunities, he said.

“In this context, if the government had not had the political courage to implement the GST, the government’s fiscal deficit would have jumped to RM10.6 billion,” he said, pointing out that this would raise the nation’s fiscal deficit from 3.1 percent to 4.8 percent of Gross Domestic Product in the first year and probably much higher in subsequent years.

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