

## **Najib: I've never been this nervous in my 41 years in politics**

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Tonight was history in the making, at least where Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak was concerned.

Because tonight was the night he was “most nervous”, in his long 41 years in politics.

Speaking at the first National Transformation 2050 (TN50) town hall session, held at the Tunku Chancellor Hall in Universiti Malaya, Najib pointed to the fact how the event was with a live audience and similarly aired live on television.

“I’ve never done this, I’ve never worn (this kind of) microphone.

“I really don’t know what would happen tonight, good or bad, (whether) I would be stumped (for answers),” said Najib in his concluding remarks.

That may have been his concern, but luckily for the premier, and as he said so himself, tonight’s dialogue session was “a most successful one”.

The one-and-a-half-hour long event started with Najib giving a speech on his vision for 2050, followed by the dialogue session between him and selected youths, which was moderated by Youth and Sports Minister Khairy Jamaluddin.

The audience which comprised young leaders, students as well as members of Najib’s cabinet, listened attentively to him as well as to those who had questions to ask, and clapped and cheered as they were expected to.

Najib definitely had no reason to be nervous as the aspirations stated by the youths as well as the ideas pitched for 2050 were not “dangerous” for the prime minister to respond to.

Ending the event, Najib said he was optimistic about the future, especially when looking at the country's youths today.

“What I want is (for you to) believe in Malaysia because this is our country.

“Love Malaysia, love your country [...] Ensure Malaysia gets in the world's top 20 nations!” thundered Najib, to loud applause and a standing ovation from the crowd.

### **Top 20 in football**

After a group photo session, the youths later scrambled for an opportunity to take selfies with the premier.

Earlier, Khairy had asked Najib whether being in the top 20 meant that Malaysia should also be in the top 20 in football.

When told that Malaysia's current ranking is at 160th place, Najib said, somewhat sceptically: “Be in the top 20 in 30 years? We cannot accept being at the 164th place, we must do something about it”.

To which the youth and sports minister replied, chuckling: “I got the message”.

Earlier on during the dialogue session, eight youths had the opportunity to share their aspirations for the TN50 plan.

Their ideas ranged from issues concerning the economy, education, the eco-system and rural development, among others.

Software engineering graduate Akram Yusof, 25, believed that the digital economy would bring the country forward, citing the success of ridesharing platform Uber.

“We will be at the losing end if we do not become the leaders in digital economy,” he told Najib, who then stated his agreement on the importance of the digital economy.

Fanitsyara Kam Pon, 23, spoke on the importance of accessible education – for everyone to receive the same opportunity regardless of race.

“This is so that minorities like me can also obtain the same opportunities,” said Fanitsyara, who is of Thai descent.

The former president of UM's students' representative council also took the opportunity to present data collected from the university's students on TN50.

The only time when the dialogue session took a slight sensitive edge was when Umno Youth exco member Shahril Hamdan stated his aspirations of a stronger national identity that was independent of ethnicities come 2050.

To this, Najib admitted that this was a “very challenging” topic.

“At such a short time, we cannot do justice to it (this issue). But I agree that our national identity must be strengthened.

“We live in harmony, there's mutual respect, but we are quite compartmentalised.

“It's not the most ideal situation but it's a situation we can live with. That's why I want to ask you how do we get to the next level,” said Najib.

Najib had, while tabling Budget 2017 in October last year, [unveiled TN50](#), stating that the time had come to “put the past aside”.

The prime minister had stressed how his vision was a bottom-up approach, insisting on receiving input from the people.

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