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PM: Public wants inclusiveness

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A POLITICAL party that understands new rules of political engagement is a political party of the future.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said a prerequisite on the new political rules of engagement is the need to strengthen the political process.

"There has to be greater engagement with the public, to understand their needs and wants in order for political parties to best serve their constituents.

"Ultimately, contemporary trends indicate that there is an overwhelming demand from the masses for inclusion and participation in the po-

litical process and in nation-building," he said in his keynote address at the 6th General Assembly of the International Conference of Asian Political Parties (ICAPP) here.

The theme for this year's general assembly is "Asia's Quest for a Better Tomorrow", which Najib described as timely and reflective of Asia's ongoing transformation into the fastest growing region in the world.

"I often say that in politics today, it is no longer business as usual, but rather business unusual."

Najib said no political party worth its salt could afford to ignore these changes, which were affecting the very people whom they exist to serve.

"Whether a political party stands for traditionalism or for unfettered modernism; whether they exist to

fight for a specific ideology or to struggle for a particular cause, the changes affecting society are obviously too important to ignore for they may determine whether or not a political party remains relevant."

He said a cursory glance at not-too-distant history would show that many political parties which, at the height of their dominance seemed unassailable, had their fortunes reversed leading to eventual demise, simply because they failed to be attuned with the changing times.

"I raise this point today because I feel it is absolutely critical for any political party to understand the need to change. Not change just for the sake of changing, but change to better serve the need of the party's stakeholders; transformation in the

name of greater effectiveness and relevance; re-invention to remain contemporary and dynamic."

He said as such, political parties must begin now to understand that a better tomorrow is founded on an improved political environment in the region in Asia's quest for a better tomorrow.

He also said Asia, as a burgeoning economic zone that is a lynchpin of global trade, could not afford any disruptions or destruction by extremism or terror.

"When I spoke at the United Nations General Assembly in September, I called for a global movement of the moderates.

"I called for moderates to marginalise the extremists and terrorists who have held the world

hostage with their bigotry and bias.

"Nowhere is this more important than in Asia, where, in some places, cells of extremist groups continue to exist to spread their message of hate."

Najib said Asian countries have a vested interest in ensuring that this region remains free and safe from ideologies espousing conflict, destruction, disunity and hostility in the name of an unholy cause.

He urged political parties across Asia to join Malaysia's call for a global movement of the moderates and reject the politics of hate and any form of extremism.

The two day ICAPP conference which ends today sees the participation of 317 Asian political parties from 51 countries and one territory.