

MALAYSIAN RESERVE

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Perdana Leadership Foundation  
CEO FORUM 2010

# Malaysia needs to keep pace with globalisation to compete, says Azman

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*Three obstacles critical to the country's success are the English language, corruption and non-transparency, and politicising of issues*

by SITI RADZIAH HAMZAH

**THERE** are various obstacles and challenges needed to be addressed in order for Malaysia to achieve its ambitious quest to become a high-income nation by 2020.

Perdana Leadership Foundation board of trustee chairman Tan Sri Azman Hashim said the country needs to make adjustments in terms of strategy and to deal with unexpected setbacks along the way.

"We have been hit by two major financial and economic crises, in 1997/98 and recently in 2008, and we have also to deal with the new generation of Malaysians with different expectations of the future and new demands on government.

"The world has also changed and globalisation has made borders more porous and tougher, and keener



MIDA chairman Sulaiman presenting his paper at the CEO Forum 2010, together with panelists (from left) PrimaKarya Media CEO Zuraidah Haji Musib, Ministry of Higher Education deputy director-general (Private Institution Sector) Datin Professor Ir Dr Siti Hamisah Tapsir and Association of Private Hospitals of Malaysia president Datuk Dr Jacob Thomas

competition for resources, knowledge and with people," Azman said in his opening remarks at the Perdana Leadership Foundation CEO Forum 2010 in Kuala Lumpur, yesterday.

Themed "Approaching 2020: Malaysia's decade for growth", the one-day forum gathered 30 CEOs and industry experts who shared their views on Malaysia's growth and challenges towards approaching 2020 as well as on industry-specific and human capital development issues.

Modelled on the successful industry insights seminar held last year, the forum was

divided into 10 plenary and concurrent sessions.

Azman outlined three of the three obstacles critical to the country's success that are the English language, corruption and non-transparency and 'the very Malaysian phenomenon of politicising practically everything under the sun'.

"What is more worrying is the politicising of race and religion, with both of these being used as political game-cards to win favours within political parties and with certain segments of the public," he said.

He said those with extreme

views are often the ones with the loudest voices, while moderate Malaysians remain the "silent majority".

"When everything in this country is interpreted through political senses, short-term populist moves are often favoured over decisions that are not so popular but with positive long-term implications.

"We have also witnessed how politically-coloured discourses on race and religion and have served to divide Malaysians, and fanned antagonism and hatred among us," he added.

Racial and religious insults

appear regularly especially in the internet, blogs and websites, he pointed out.

"For now, cool heads prevail but how long can we expect the opposing sides to remain cool," he said.

On English, Azman said the country needs to raise the competency in the language. He noted that poor English equals weak ability to access, understand and synthesise most of the new knowledge that will be produced and this hampers production of new ideas.

"A recent article predicts that around 2012, which is only a couple years away, the total amount of knowledge will double every 12 months. Access to and understanding the information that is available today at one's fingertips (especially) via the internet is critical for a knowledge economy that Malaysia aspires to be," he said.

Among the speakers at the CEO Forum were Tan Sri G Gnanalingam, the executive director of Westports Malaysia, Datuk Seri Che Khalib Mohamad Noh, CEO of Tenaga Nasional Bhd and Tan Sri Sulaiman Mahbob, the director-general of Malaysian Industrial Development Authority (MIDA).

Pre by Shiddiqin Zon