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Modi commends Najib for transforming Malaysia

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KUALA LUMPUR: In an inaugural “live” video conference, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak and his Indian counterpart, Narendra Modi, delivered their speeches and shared thoughts on economic prospects and the path towards stronger inter-Asian ties.

Najib, who was at *The Economic Times*’ Asian Business Leaders Conclave here yesterday, expressed his gratitude to Modi for being upbeat about India-Malaysia relations, business opportunities and how Asean and Asia would be the geographical area of the future.

“May I congratulate you for being a bold reformist, for doing things a lesser mortal would not have attempted. I wish you every success. If you are courageous enough to do the reforms, you will reap the rewards in due course,” he told Modi.

Modi made his presence felt when he appeared on the big screen of the hall. He gave his personal guarantee that he would be there to lend a helping hand to Malaysia and other investors if needed.

“I personally assure you that I shall be there when you need me. India is not only a good destination. It is always a good decision to be in India.”

Modi commended Najib for transforming Malaysia to achieve its goal of becoming a developed country by 2020.

He recounted his memorable visit to Malaysia last year and welcomed Najib to visit India again to strengthen bilateral cooperation.

Najib, who remained on stage to hear Modi’s invitation, responded by saying: “Thank you for your kind invitation. I will visit India and (see) the exciting things happening under your strong leadership.”

Modi earlier delivered a video address titled “Moving towards stronger Inter-Asian ties”, saying the growth prospects in Asia was bright and the time was right for the continent.

“The 21st century is the century of Asia. Despite unfavourable and uncertain global economic environment, the growth prospects of the Asian region have been a ray of hope.

“This is a time for integration, and this cannot happen without openness, and India has always been open at the heart. At an economic level, too, we are now one of the most open and integrated economies.”

Modi said his visit to Malaysia had deepened Malaysia-India partnership in areas integral to the success of “Act East” policies. He encouraged business leaders to promote the agendas of the two countries.

Modi said the focus of his agenda was on digitisation, rolling out the Goods and Services Tax, clearing the system from black money and fighting corruption.