

Chinese economic group calls Najib 'Father of Transformation and Moderation'
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By Clara Chooi

PUTRAJAYA, Jan 25 — Datuk Seri Najib Razak was crowned today the "Father of Moderation and Transformation" by the World Chinese Economic Forum (WCEF), which said the prime minister's "fair and just leadership" had benefitted the Chinese community "tremendously".

Najib was also conferred the "Distinguished Lifetime Achievement Award" by the WCEF for his work and commitment towards transforming Malaysia.

"You (Najib) have contributed significantly to the transformation of the Malaysian nation.

"The Chinese community has benefitted tremendously from you for your fair and just leadership," WCEF chairman Datuk Michael Yeoh said in his speech at the conferment ceremony here today.

Among others, Yeoh praised Najib's 1 Malaysia platform, his administration's decision to increase allocation to Chinese schools and the introduction of tax exemptions for churches and temples, saying the initiatives were proof of the prime minister's commitment to "fairness and justice".

"The Global Chinese Diaspora which the WCEF links recognises your immense contributions to the Malaysian Chinese community and are honoured to present to you, Sir, the Distinguished Lifetime Achievement Award," added Yeoh, who is also the Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute (ASLI) CEO.

Najib, when thanking WCEF for the award, said he was honoured his contributions were recognised by a community he has always held "in the very highest regard".

"(This is) ... not only for your business and entrepreneurial acumen but your commitment to education, to charitable causes and of course, to community work.

"Without your contributions, Malaysia wouldn't be where it is today," he said.

Najib expounded on his 1 Malaysia concept, saying it was only through celebrating the country's diversity could successes be achieved.

"We must pool our collective talents and in the interests of our nation and our side — if we continue to pool together, I have no doubt we will win out," he said.

Najib also said hope now rests in the East — particularly countries like China, India and ASEAN nations — to fuel the global recovery and propel world economic growth as the eurozone is currently still in dire financial straits.

"I am not someone who is advocating the old rivalries between East and West but rather we should complement each other ... but given the situation now, we (the East) should lead the way," he said.

Najib said the China-ASEAN-India-Middle East partnership would create massive business and investment opportunities, helping to bring together business leaders from across the globe.

During today's function, Najib also launched the WCEF's Global Business Council, that aims to further link business leaders and entrepreneurs from China, Southeast Asia, Australia and Europe.

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