

**BN needs fresh mandate to speed up reforms, Najib tells Malaysians**  
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**By Emily Ding**

KUALA LUMPUR, May 3 — Barisan Nasional (BN) needs a fresh mandate to accelerate reforms to stimulate the economy, tackle graft, strengthen security and education for a more cohesive society, Datuk Seri Najib Razak said today.

In an open letter to Malaysians before the May 5 general election, the country's sixth prime minister said there has been much transformation in his four years of office but there was a lot more to be done.

"There is still much to be done: I am conscious that our transformation is still a story that is not yet complete.

"With a fresh mandate, I hope to accelerate reform; to continue to make our economy stronger and our politics more responsive. I want to do more to tackle corruption, to strengthen our security and education system, and build a more cohesive society. I want to help build a better nation that I see for Malaysia," he said in the letter sent to The Malaysian Insider.

The BN chairman became prime minister on April 3, 2009 and immediately worked on the New Economic Model (NEM) that included the Government Transformation Programme (GTP) and the Economic Transformation Programme (ETP) for a high-income nation by 2020.

Both programmes have helped rejuvenate the local economy, attracting fresh foreign and domestic investments, and enticing Malaysians abroad to return home in the past few years.

I ask that you approach this choice with an open mind, for this election will determine our future for decades to come ... it is a once-in-a-generation chance to set the direction for our country. — Datuk Seri Najib Razak

Najib also opened up 27 business sub-sectors from just Bumiputera businessmen and later asked the country's sovereign wealth funds to sell down stakes in 10 companies to entrepreneurs.

He also worked on an initiative for affordable public housing two years ago as speculation and foreign demand for houses in the cities have pushed prices beyond the means of the average young Malaysian.

In the 17-point BN manifesto released last month, Najib promised to build one million units of affordable housing in the next five years — the country's largest venture ever.

"We have delivered on the pledges that we made four years ago. With your support, we will

also deliver on the policies in our election manifesto," added Najib, who has expressed confidence that his track record is better than the promises of his political opponents.

Najib also said that everyone should exercise their right to vote, no matter their political affiliation, adding Election Day "reminds us all that ultimate power rests not with politicians but with the people".

"This is the 13th general election, and I believe the choice we face is the clearest yet. This election is about the country we want to be, about two competing visions of our future

"I ask that you approach this choice with an open mind, for this election will determine our future for decades to come," he said, adding "it is a once-in-a-generation chance to set the direction for our country".

Najib also said he was proud of his government's record and the difference it has made to people's lives in reducing poverty, building roads and clinics.

"We can build a more prosperous, more confident nation, where economic growth and political reform bring unity, stability and opportunity for all. I am confident that our manifesto reflects this belief," he said, adding the BN candidates shared "this reformist outlook".

The Umno president also said he had listened to the people, especially the young voters, and acknowledged their demands for political reforms.

In a decision that surprised the nation two years ago on Malaysia Day, Najib showed his democratic zeal by announcing that he would repeal the Internal Security Act, end the state of emergency and amend laws to allow student participation in politics, expand peaceful assembly rights and publishing restrictions on the print media.

He noted the difficulty in making "such sweeping political reforms", saying "I always have people telling me to go faster, while others say we should slow down. But I believe the pace of change has been right for Malaysia."

"And I ask you to re-elect a government that has delivered on its promises, expanded democratic freedoms and set Malaysia firmly on the path to a brighter future.

"With humility I ask that you choose me as your prime minister. I will be honoured to serve you for the good of our nation," he wrote in the letter.

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