

**By : DATO' SRI MOHD NAJIB TUN ABD RAZAK**  
**Venue : DAVOS**  
**Date : 27-01-2005**  
**Title : WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM ANNUAL MEETING- PLENARY**  
**SESSION: "MODERNISATION WITHOUT WESTERNISATION"**

This is the full transcript of the Deputy Prime Minister Dato' Sri Mohd Najib Razak remarks at the plenary session "Modernisation Without Westernisation" at the World Economic Forum annual meeting in Davos from January 27 to 29, 2005.

This session was chaired by CNN International Correspondent and Anchor Jim Clancy. The other panelists were Prime Minister of Pakistan Shaukat Aziz, Prime Minister of Egypt Ahmad Mahmoud Nazif and Iran Vice-President Masoumeh Ebtekar.

As far as our experience in Malaysia is concern it has been a relatively a positive experience in a sense we are able to marry the practice of Islam as well as introducing development and modernization. But our concept of modernization is rooted in our cultural heritage. It is also based on the fundamental tenets of Islam. We like to say we are fundamentalists but that is a different connotation in the West. The West uses fundamentalism that is equated extremism. But when we say we are fundamentalists ... we pray five times a day for example, we are fundamentalists Islam. But in the same manner we reject violence, we reject extremism, we are very pluralistic society because that is what Islam is all about. Islam protects other religion. Islam allows other religion to exists, to co-exist with Islam and that is the practice in Malaysia. But there are elements of Westernization which I supposed are ubiquitous, you talk about the Starbuck and BigMac of the world, they will be around, but that doesn't mean we are changing our values to the extent that we adopt in entirety Western way of life. I was quite intrigue when I read either the Time or the Newsweek magazine which had the picture of the experience in Turkey ... there was a picture of a Muslim couple drinking in a bar. That to me encapsulate a certain perspective when people in the West think of modernization, they equate with a change of value. But as far we, in Malaysia, are concerned, we can modernize, we can require technology, we can increased our wealth, we can attract foreign investments, we can encourage democratic process, we can strengthen the process rule of law but that doesn't mean that we want to abandon our cultural heritage or religious values. It is a tough battle but is something we that intent to ensure that we can develop according to our own way, according to our on mould and we can be a force to be reckoned with. We believe that Islam is not only compatible with modernization, in fact Islam is a force for modernization. It is a fact of history that Islam was indeed a force for modernization. It predated the renaissance in Europe and that is the strength of Islam and that is where have to come back to the fundamentals of Islam and we interpret Islam in the right way. Islam is positive, Islam is good for the world, Islam will encourage civilizational dialogue in the world.

Let me make one point. I believe that whatever is required for progress, for success, for modernization, the perquisite is the same for Muslims, for Christian society, for any society, it is the same. To achieve progress and success you need basically good governance, transparency, to strengthen rule of law, need good visionary and incorruptible leaders. These are basic requirements. These are requirements for

Muslim community, as such as the requirement in the Western world, Africa, in any part of the world. We must not reject that. The Muslim world must accept good governance as an integral part if we want to progress and to modernize. What is the difference? The difference is in our faith for example if we pray five times a day, we fast during Ramadhan, it doesn't matter if we wear pink stripe suit or whatever you like, it doesn't matter. It doesn't make you Westernized in that sense but you are holding on to your Islamic values and that is important to us. And for countries like Iraq ... the process of democracy is important and consonant with Islam because Islam encourages consultation. The process of Shura is part and parcel of Islamic tradition, in fact, it predate democracy in the West so we shouldn't reject democracy. Democracy is good for the Muslim world but what we what we like to see is not something which is imposed and replicated overnight. For democracy to succeed we need values, strong institutions, you need awareness, you need public education what democracy is all about. That is why countries that tried to go democratic overnight usually do not succeed. It has to be a gradual process of adopting this values, of understanding that you are responsible to elect responsible leaders and that is the kind of message ... because democracy can also lead anarchy, democracy can also lead to countries that are not governable so I think we should not treat democracy as though it is a religion. It is a tool for us to achieve progress and modernization but we should progress and attain it according to our history, tradition and level of readiness.

What is more important is the output of democracy. Sometimes not enough attention is being paid .... People try to debate about the system itself or trying to replicate system that is successful elsewhere and to be adopted in another country but very little time and focus is being brought to the whole question of result and output. To me, as long as you have democracy that is important, more importantly, what is the end result. The end result must be the betterment of our people.