

By : **DATO' SRI MOHD NAJIB BIN TUN HAJI ABDUL RAZAK
PERDANA MENTERI MALAYSIA**

Venue : **SABAH ROOM, SHANGRI-LA HOTEL, KUALA LUMPUR**

Date : **01/07/2011**

Title : **DATUM:KL KUALA LUMPUR ARCHITECTURE FESTIVAL**

1. Let me start by welcoming you to the very first DATUM:KL Kuala Lumpur Architecture Festival. To all of you; to the Presidents of the regional architects' institutes; and to everyone attending the meetings of the ASEAN Architect Council and the Architects Regional Council Asia – Selamat Datang!

2. I would also like to thank our very own architectural institute, Pertubuhan Akitek Malaysia (PAM), for giving me the opportunity to speak with you today. In just eight short years this event has grown from a conference of 200 people into a month-long festival attended by more than 2,500 leading lights of the architectural community from countries right around the world, and I am very proud to be involved.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

3. Tonight we come together to celebrate how Malaysian architecture has shaped the country that we are today – and of course the architects who, through their creativity, their originality and their vision, have guided us along the way.

4. Their work reflects a diversity of styles born out of Malaysia's own cultural diversity – from the traditional roof design incorporated into the pitched canopy entrance of Maybank's Training Centre to the rich and ornate detail of traditional Islamic architecture blended with the latest in modern design seen in the Ministry of Finance.

5. But as well as being a celebration of all we have achieved to date this festival is squarely focused on the future – and I am delighted that it seeks to inspire and engage with the public and to communicate to the next generation the power of the places where we live our lives.

6. That power can be felt all around us – from the building we are gathered in today, which in keeping in the purpose of this festival is a hotel renowned for its design, to those that we inhabit every day of our lives. From your drawing boards in offices and practices across the world come designs that become permanent fixtures on our landscapes – designs with the ability to inspire, awe and to transfix the imagination and the mind.

7. So architecture can be about creating new experiences in old spaces, but it is also frequently, of course, about creating something completely new – buildings that influence entire landscapes and that go on to become icons in their own right.

8. Here in this city we have the Petronas Towers – recognised by people the world over and an enduring symbol of Malaysia. Almost every tourist who comes to Kuala Lumpur will have a picture of them – but despite the fact that they remain unchanging in their form, each picture will be different. Things like the weather, the time of day and whether the towers are pictured from the North or the South will make each person’s photo and experience unique to them.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

9. It is this interaction between structures and people that makes architecture so unique and so compelling – and the structures that, as societies, we choose to build are also a lasting testament to our values. Here, for example, the spirit of 1Malaysia is woven into the physical fabric of our society, existing not just as an abstract concept but informing both our private and our public spaces.

10. Go into any office block or residential high-rise and, as you might expect, you will find Muslim prayer rooms. But you will also find that, in deference to the Chinese community, many buildings do not have a fourth floor, or a 14th, or a 24th – the number four is considered inauspicious. Three-quarters of Malaysians do not have Chinese heritage, but we are happy to accommodate those who do.

11. To give another example, last year saw the completion of a new 600 metre flyover here in Kuala Lumpur, which features a design of children of different races chasing a butterfly as a symbol of our racial integration – reminding people of the 1Malaysia concept every time that they pass by.

12. Every day, in all sorts of ways, the built environment contributes to people’s experiences as they walk down the street, run to catch a train or sit and stand together in public spaces. And of course architecture also contributes to the economic success and competitiveness of nations. Countries in Asia have begun to recognise this fact and here in Malaysia we have placed great emphasis on becoming a creative hub and a global design centre.

13. It is this combination of impacting on people’s day to day lives and contributing to the wider success of our society that makes this festival so important for Malaysia. And there are certainly exhibitions here to suit all tastes – from “House@sea”, which focuses on the interplay between built structures and the forces of nature, to “Review:KL”, which captures in photographs the magnificent urban perspectives that we see every day.

14. “Architects Malaysia” features a timeline of the evolution of Malaysian architecture from the early colonial influences of the British, Dutch and Portuguese to the Chinese, Indian and Malay architecture that we see in all states in Malaysia.

15. And as well as documenting the history of Malaysia, the exhibition also displays the work of recent winners of the PAM Awards. These designs stretch from the turn of the millennium, when winners included the Putrajaya Bus and Taxi Terminal – used

by tens of thousands of people every year – to just last year, when the winners included the Tidal Bore Observatory in Sri Man.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

16. This is just a taste of the exciting work being done by the many talented Malaysian architects who will play an important role as we continue down our path towards developed nation status – not just through designing new and better places to work and to do business but through using their skills and knowledge to shape people’s day to day lives.

17. One example of this – and it is an important aspect of development in our country – is affordable and environmentally-friendly homes. We have already shown our commitment to make Malaysia green, and in spirit of 1Malaysia we have now developed, together with the private sector, professionals and NGOs, an internationally accepted standard for green buildings.

18. In our current socio economic landscape housing remains a critical issue for all Malaysians – and to address this, I will be launching very soon a new affordable home scheme that will provide home buyers with 100% loans at a price that is affordable to low middle and middle income earners.

19. I believe architecture has an important role to play not just in landmark projects like the Petronas Towers but in smaller, more modest buildings like schools, community centres and religious spaces – because good design should not be the preserve of the rich, it should be open to the rakyat.

20. I have come across schools in Malaysia so innovatively designed that the classroom doors fold out to become an assembly hall. At home, good design can help with maximising living space and choosing the most economical building materials – not forgetting strategically placed windows and rooftops to manage heat and sunlight. I have even seen mosques with air conditioning pipes rising from the floor rather than the ceiling in order to improve energy efficiency.

21. I want all low and middle income families in Malaysia to be able to have an affordable home that is comfortable, sustainable and, where possible, equipped with renewable alternative energy that will lower their energy bills and improve their living standards. And this is where as PAM mentioned just moments ago, PAM can play an important role in Malaysia’s nation building – because achieving this vision will require the contribution of some of our country’s most talented and creative minds.

22. As we look to develop our creative industries and modernise our economy it is vital that we continue to nurture this vibrant talent pool. Through open competitions for projects of national and public interest, the government is looking to provide more opportunities for and to recognise the work of Malaysian architects – and we hope this will encourage the private sector to do likewise.

23. PAM has been leading the way in this regard and I am delighted that, alongside the Ministry of Federal Territory and Urban Wellbeing, they are organising a competition for a new countdown clock. This idea is a noble one, and I hope that PAM will ensure that the participants will have a free hand in submitting appropriate and cost effective designs. I am excited about seeing the results and time permitting, I look forward to be involved in celebrating this competition.

24. I am also pleased to launch this evening a new publication, “30 under 40”, which features 30 emerging Malaysian architects below 40 years of age. Certainly, significant developments are already underway that show Malaysia to be a place of bold and brave design. The youth are the people who will shape our physical landscape as our economic environment continues to grow. To further enhance architecture development, PAM has provided input for the Malaysian Architectural Policy which the Government is considering.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

25. Architecture is the reflection of Malaysia’s transformation into a modern, sustainable, and inclusive society. These developments will be unifying symbols of Malaysia and that will benefit the people of Malaysia. On that note, let me once again extend my congratulations to PAM for organising such a successful event. I have high hopes that it will go on to become one of the world’s leading architecture festivals – and when it does, all of you here today will have the honour of having been here when it started!

Thank you.

Wabillahitaufik Walhidayah Wassalamualaikum Warahmatuallhi Wabarakatuh.