

DATO' SRI MOHD NAJIB BIN TUN HAJI ABDUL RAZAK
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Bismillahirrahmanirrahim
Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh

Prime Minister, ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests.

1. It is a great honour to welcome you to our country; to be here today at the Malaysian outpost of my alma mater, Nottingham University; and to have this opportunity to return the hospitality you extended to me and the Malaysian delegation when we visited Britain last year. The bonds of friendship, cooperation and compassion that exist between our nations are truly cause for celebration – and standing next to David here this afternoon I am reminded of another very special partnership that has long benefitted not just Britain but the world.

2. Like many others, I saw the pictures of Prime Minister Cameron and President Obama enjoying a basketball game in Dayton, Ohio last month, hot dogs in hand... so, not to be outdone, I thought we could maybe go and watch a bit of badminton later today and enjoy an equally photogenic nasi lemak! For the uninitiated, nasi lemak is Malaysia's national dish: coconut rice, anchovies, peanuts, cucumber, egg and spicy sambal sauce, all wrapped up to perfection in a banana leaf. What a good job the Malaysian passion for makkan – eating – is offset by our passion for sport!

3. From basketball to badminton and everything in between, sport is just one of the many ties that bind us – and I will certainly be among the billions tuning in later this year to watch the shining stars of track and field compete for glory in the London 2012 Olympics. Malaysia's own Olympic history stretches as far back as 1956, when we were still a British colony... sadly that history is much longer than our medal tally, but what we lack in numbers we make up for in consistency, which must surely count for something! And with Lee Chong Wei, the men's badminton world number one, batting for Malaysia in London I am confident that we will soon be adding a few more medals to that roster.

4. So the Olympics is a huge source of excitement here just as it is in Britain, but it's impossible for me to talk about sport without talking about Malaysia's love affair with English football. In fact, we love it so much that Malaysian companies have recently bought two of your clubs, QPR and Cardiff City! I know the Prime Minister is a big Aston Villa fan – I myself support Manchester United, but I won't embarrass David by recalling the score line in their last encounter. Oh, alright then, Man U won 1-nil... let's see if Villa can turn things around when the two teams meet again on Sunday!

5. Ladies and gentlemen, the list of things Malaysia has inherited from Britain is a long one. Marks and Sparks. Manglish – Malaysian English, lah! Driving on the left – although we do it so much better than you! And of course afternoon tea... I can tell you there is nowhere better to take tea in Kuala Lumpur than the Carcosa Seri Negara, built by the British back in 1897 as an early indication of their priorities! I think cricket – another great British invention, and a game that I know David follows avidly – must be unique in having an afternoon tea break built into the game. How very civilised!

6. But I must say, I have long admired the gentlemanly British approach to life. I remember, back in my student days, being taken to White's club in London for a coffee. Everywhere I turned there were English gents slumped forward in their chairs, and I asked my host, Lord Cranborne, how one could tell if they were still alive. Without missing a beat, he said "by looking at the dates on their papers!"

7. While we don't have too many gentlemen's clubs in these parts, there are of course many other substantial and enduring legacies from Britain to Malaysia. We are lucky enough, for example, to

benefit from a civil service based on the British model. My favourite TV show is Yes Minister, and I particularly like the scene where Bernard describes what happens when people write in. There are, he explains, two official replies to correspondence. "Under consideration" means "we've lost the file". "Under active consideration" means "we're trying to find it"... I sometimes think bureaucracies are all a bit like that!

8. But it's not just the Malaysian civil service that has been touched by Britain. With the Westminster parliamentary model, we owe the Brits the very seat of our democracy – and when I say seat I mean it literally, with the Speaker's chair in the Dewan Ra'ayat presented by the British House of Commons in 1963. But, joking aside, Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia's first Prime Minister and the father of our country's independence, remarked back then that "the rulers had departed and returned to Malaysia not just as friends but as the best of friends" – and it is certainly true that Britain stands to this day as a great friend to Malaysia.

9. Last year, all of us here were shocked to witness the brutal assault of Malaysian student Ashraf Haziq during the riots that so badly rocked the British nation. But we were touched when, in the aftermath, thousands upon thousands of Britons expressed first their anger then their heartfelt concern, condolence and support. Among them was Prime Minister Cameron, who wrote Ashraf a personal letter – and I would like to express my gratitude to David and to everyone in Britain who reached out to this young Malaysian in his hour of need.

10. In an age where some still try to drive wedges between races and religions, the ordinary people of Britain didn't hesitate to open their hearts and to show the world that London is a city where outsiders are welcome but extremists are not. And here in Malaysia we share your vision of a multicultural, multi-ethnic nation. It is a commitment that dates right back to the days of merdeka, when Malaysia's founding fathers agreed to set aside their differences and celebrate instead the things they had in common – their faith in hard work, their respect for others, their pride in winning independence and their determination to build something beautiful from it.

11. They are beliefs we are prepared to fight for. When I met the Prime Minister in London last year we set out our mutual commitment to strengthening co-operation on security and crime and to defeating international terrorism – and today, we have an opportunity to renew our work together once again. But that work and that commitment must, I believe, spread far beyond Malaysia, far beyond even Malaysia's bilateral relations with Great Britain, to every country in the world. That is why I have called for a new Movement of the Moderates to face down extremism whenever and wherever it is found – and I would like to take this opportunity today to invite nominations from the British side to the Board of Advisors of the Global Movement of the Moderates Foundation.

12. Fundamentalism – frequently referred to in the same breath as "Islamic fundamentalism" – has too often been equated with extremism, yet the minority of people who are erroneously described as "fundamentalists" are in fact those who reject Islam not those who follow it most closely. As Prime Minister Cameron has observed, there is a tendency for people to "talk about moderate Muslims as if all devout Muslims must be extremist", but David, you are right to say that being moderate and being devout go hand in hand.

13. Islam abhors extremism, abhors terror, abhors the killing of innocents and the mindlessly self-serving acts of suicide bombers – whether they strike in London, in Bali or in New York. Just because a country is majority Muslim doesn't mean it can't adhere to good governance, democracy and the rule of law. And just because it is made up of people of all religions doesn't mean they cannot live in harmony. Just look at our country, Malaysia.

14. The Prime Minister has also spoken memorably about "muscular liberalism" – and I agree with him that being moderate is not the same as being a wimp! So I say again, today – and I have no doubt that he shares my views in this regard – it is for all of us as moderates, Muslims, Christians, Jews and atheists alike, to demonstrate this muscularity and use our unity and strength to defeat intolerance and stay true to the path of moderation.

15. That is our common path – a path that, here in Malaysia, has seen the colonial-era Internal Security Act replaced with new civil liberties and freedoms, and that in the UK heralded the end of decades of conflict and strife in Northern Ireland. Those are also our common values – values, it must be said, that were forged in Britain’s world class education system!

16. But if Britain and Malaysia are united in our values, we are equally united in our commitment to increasing prosperity, raising living standards and building open, outward-facing economies. Ever since the East India Company opened its first base in the region in Penang more than 200 years ago, Malaysia’s trade links with the UK have been strong, and they are getting stronger – so I want to personally thank David for putting right almost two decades of benign neglect!

17. Today, you can walk into any mall in Kuala Lumpur and you will see British brands like Topshop, Burberry and Marks and Spencer alongside Malaysian ones like Maxis, Parkson and Metrojaya. And it is not only retail firms who’ve made the move – our financial sector is also host to firms like RBS, Barclays and Standard Chartered who are working to develop a new generation of financial products that can meet the ever-growing expectations of Malaysians. But it is certainly not a one way street: the UK is an attractive destination for Malaysian companies seeking to invest in Europe.

18. Economically, culturally, politically, our bilateral relationship has not only stood the test of time. It has flourished down the years, from the days of my father -- who I must admit, Prime Minister, was a member of the British Labour Party, although don’t take it too hard, this was only because Malaysia back then stood more chance of gaining independence under Labour! – to the place where, more than 50 years later, we find ourselves today.

19. In this, the Diamond Jubilee year of Her Majesty the Queen, there can be no better moment to celebrate the historic ties, both big and small, between our nations and to renew them for our times – so let me once again extend the very warmest welcome to David and to all our British friends.

Thank you.

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