

Tun Abdul Razak Distinguished Lecture : **“Transforming Asia-Pacific and Turkey”**

With

H.E Recep Tayyip Erdogan
Prime Minister of Turkey

When : 10 January 2014
Where : Mandarin Oriental Hotel, Kuala Lumpur
Who : H.E Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Prime Minister of Turkey

Summary

The Chairman of Foundation of Research on Transformation (FORT), gave the opening remarks. As an alumni of International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), he is proud of the recognition given by the university to Prime Minister Erdogan who was conferred a Doctor of Philosophy in Management degree. He further added given the changes in the political and economic spheres with the emergence of China as a key player in the region, a clear and transformative plan is needed to steer the region towards socio-economic growth and prosperity.

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey started his speech by focusing primarily on four key areas, namely solidarity, Islam, Turkey’s foreign policy as well as their way to move forward.

Solidarity

H.E Recep Tayyip Erdogan stated that strengthening bilateral relations between Turkey and Malaysia reflects the solidarity between both countries that has been established for many years. In 2012, the bilateral trade volume was 2 billion dollars which is a strong number compared to a few years earlier, where the trade volume was only 200 million dollars. As for the future, both Malaysia and Turkey have set a target by the year 2020 and 2030, respectively to achieve a developed nation status.

Islam is a Religion of Peace

He then continued by referring to Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak, stating how the Prime Minister of Malaysia emphasizes on policies to be implemented based on meritocracy, equality and welfare of the people irrespective of race and religion. Despite scepticism, Islam and democracy can coexist and Malaysia and Turkey are prime examples that illustrate that religion and peace and harmony are not in conflict with one another. Both countries emphasised the importance of moderation while staying true to the teachings of Islam.

In recent years, there have been some quarters who have tarnished the good name of Islam. Acts of terrorism and other form of violence have been associated as fighting for Islam or Jihad in the name of Islam. There may be a number of supposed “Islamic groups” that claim that they are doing acts of terrorism in the name of Islam, but they are instead doing a disservice to Islam. Muslim countries such as Malaysia and Turkey are the best opposite in this context. The Prime Minister stressed that Islam is a religion of peace and therefore, Islam prohibits violent acts such as murders and terrorism. Similar to Malaysia, Turkey is also against terrorism and condemn any form of violence or acts of terrorism. He stressed that it is our responsibility as a Muslim nation to continue to display a sense of moderation, compassion and respect for other religion and countries. We must maintain and preserve the good name of Islam to ensure that it will not lose any value.

Foreign Policy

When it comes to foreign policy, Turkey has long followed the footsteps of their forefathers. Turkey has always maintained its commitment to provide assistance in any form to any country in need of assistance. For instance, Turkey has provided humanitarian aid to the people of Aceh, Myanmar and Syria. In addition, Turkey has always placed importance on democracy and to listen to the voice of the people. For example, In Egypt, Turkey has voiced out that only an elected government should govern the country. As for the political crisis in Syria, Turkey is supportive of the voice of the majority of the people.

He stressed that the Asia-Pacific region is important to Turkey’s foreign policy. Turkey has embarked on various initiatives to create a dynamic cooperation with various regional organisations namely the ASEAN partnership and Asia cooperation.

Apart from that, Turkey also plans to open up their doors towards the African continent. To date, they have 23 new embassies in the continent. At the same time, they have 11 embassies and 1 consular office. This is a key example of Turkey’s foreign policy to increase solidarity with other countries.

Turkey: Moving Forward

The Prime Minister explained that Turkey plan to join the European Union (EU) in the near future. This is because they believe that Turkey can contribute in many ways when they join an organisation of great stature like the EU. In addition, Turkey believes in

global justice and taking care of the welfare of the people. NATO and the European Union serve as an important international platform which will function as a vehicle for Turkey to create solidarity and sense of belonging with other countries in the world.

The Prime Minister mentioned that Malaysia is an example of a nation that has felt the transformation of the region. Malaysia has attracted the interest of many countries and international organizations as a progressive and moderate Muslim nation under the leadership of Prime Minister Najib. In this regard, he stressed the importance of Turkey and Malaysia to strengthen the existing bilateral relations that will not only benefit both countries but also to counter external factors such as the fight against terrorism. It is important to maintain the stability in the region and Malaysia is a key player that can contribute towards the peace and stability of the region.

In the future, Malaysia and Turkey will seek to strengthen the existing relations and joining forces with other Muslim nations to fight Islamophobia. He added that Turkey considers Malaysia as a brotherly country and close to heart. He hopes that both countries will continue to strive for solidarity and ensure peace and stability in the region.

Photo Gallery

Contact

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