



SPEECH TEXT
YB DATO' SRI MUSTAPA BIN MOHAMED
MINISTER IN THE PRIME MINISTER' DEPARTMENT (ECONOMY)

IFNIA 2021: POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN CHINA –
LESSONS FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES
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Ladies and gentlemen,

1. First, I would like to thank the organizers for inviting me to say a few words on this very important topic – especially to Tan Sri Ong Tee Keat, the Chairman of the Centre for New Inclusive Asia, who has worked tirelessly to promote discourse on socio-economic policies that can help better the lives of all of us.
2. On the 8th of April earlier this year, I had the pleasure of welcoming Tang Rui from the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Malaysia, and Ms Li Xin, the Deputy Director General of the International Poverty Reduction Center in China to share China's Experience and Achievements in Poverty Alleviation.
3. Besides my team at the Economic Planning Unit (EPU), other attendees from the Malaysian Government included representatives from key players in charge of poverty alleviation in Malaysia – including the Ministry of Finance, the Implementation Coordination Unit from the Prime Minister's Department, the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development, and the Ministry of Housing and Local Government.
4. It was a fruitful session which I believe helped shed a lot of light to the Malaysian Government on China's success in addressing absolute poverty.

China's successful poverty alleviation policies have gained the attention of not just Malaysia, but of many other countries in the developing world.

5. China's experience will provide all of us insights into effective strategies in addressing poverty in our respective countries.

Ladies and gentlemen,

6. On the 25th of February earlier this year at a grand gathering held in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, Chinese President Xi Jinping declared victory in ending poverty in China, stating that 100 million Chinese citizens have been lifted from poverty.
7. Over the years since the 1980s that I have visited China, the economic growth I have seen in the past 4 decades has been nothing short of remarkable.
8. The China of today is a far cry of my first impressions of China, when I first visited in 1985, which was admittedly, one of economic backwardness. There were bicycles and Mao suits everywhere, whereas today China is one of the world's leading centres of technology and eCommerce.

Ladies and gentlemen,

9. Eradicating poverty has been part and parcel of Malaysia's national development agenda since Independence.
10. While Malaysia has been successful in reducing absolute poverty, as evident in the decrease of poverty incidence from 49.3% in the 1970s to 5.6% in 2019 – we have some way to go to eradicate poverty as China has.
11. Besides absolute poverty, Malaysia has used multidimensional poverty indices – which looks at the quality of health, education, and the standard of living among the poor – as a more important indicator measuring the quality of life among our citizens.

Ladies and gentlemen,

12. Covid-19 has exacerbated the issue of poverty globally. According to the World Bank, global extreme poverty rose in 2020 for the first time in over 20 years due to COVID-19. The pandemic has resulted in an additional 120 million living in poverty, with the number expected to rise to about 150 million by the end of 2021.
13. In Malaysia, the percentage of Malaysians who live below the poverty line grew from 5.6% in 2019 to 8.4% in 2020 – largely due to the economic effects of containing the pandemic. It is estimated that the number of poor households in Malaysia increased to 639.8 thousand in 2020 compared to 405.4 thousand in 2019.
14. It is a wake-up call for all of us as policymakers to step up and implement the reforms and policies necessary to curb poverty and improve the standards of living of those among us whom luck has dealt an unkind hand.
15. China stands tall in achieving the poverty alleviation goal set by the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development ten years ahead of schedule.
16. China provides the world, especially those of us from developing countries, an example of how economic and social policies can take hundreds of millions of people out of poverty. The message is clear - if China can do it, so can we.

Ladies and gentlemen,

17. In the upcoming 12th Malaysia Plan, which is a socio-economic development plan that charts the next five years of Malaysia's agenda, poverty alleviation will play a key role in the document.

18. Curbing poverty and improving the standard of living among the lives of the downtrodden is a noble goal that all of humanity can, and should unite around. A decent standard of living is a basic human right.

Ladies and gentlemen,

19. The tale of China is a tale of reforms. Once a closed economy which suffered from famines and starvations, China is today a successful economy which has low instances of poverty.
20. This is why the conference today is important for us to learn from China's best practices. Thank you to everyone who is speaking today for contributing to conversations that have the potential of lifting people out of poverty.
21. A special thanks again is due to my former colleague in the Malaysian Cabinet, Tan Sri Ong Tee Keat, for putting all this together. Thank you everyone, and all the best in the discussions ahead.