

**SPEECH TEXT BY PRIME MINISTER : INTERNATIONAL YOUNG LEADERS SUMMIT (iFUTURE) 2024**

By : DATO' SERI ANWAR IBRAHIM

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**SPEECH TEXT**

**YAB DATO' SERI ANWAR BIN IBRAHIM**

**PRIME MINISTER**

**FOR**

**INTERNATIONAL YOUNG LEADERS SUMMIT (iFUTURE) 2024**

**16TH AUGUST 2024 (FRIDAY)**

**WORLD TRADE CENTER, KUALA LUMPUR**

Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh, dan

Salam sejahtera,

Alhamdulillah, Nahmaduhu Wa Nusolli Ala Rasoolihil Kareem

**YB Dato' Seri Diraja Dr. Zambry Abd Kadir,**

Menteri Pengajian Tinggi;

**YB Senator Dr. Zulkifli Hasan,**

Timbalan Menteri di Jabatan Perdana Menteri (Hal Ehwal Agama);

**YBhg. Dato' Seri IR. Dr. Zaini bin Ujang,**

Ketua Setiausaha Kementerian Pengajian Tinggi;

**YBrs. Prof. Dr. Azlinda Azman,**

Ketua Pengarah Pendidikan Tinggi;

Naib cancellor, Profesor-profesor yg hadir; dan yang pentingnya anak2 yg dikasihi sekalian.

1. Saya turut bersyukur ke hadrat Allah SWT dan berbangga dengan semangat yang anak-anak tunjukkan, berinteraksi seperti mana mengikut nasihat bapa Zambry sebentar tadi. Bagaimana kita harus gunakan ruang ini sebaik mungkin, memanfaatkan waktu, mengikat silaturrahim, menimba pengalaman teman-teman, tetapi pertahankan semangat, cita-cita murni dan idealism. Apa erti hidup tanpa pegangan, tanpa prinsip, tanpa nilai? Apa erti kekayaan, apa erti ilmu kalau tidak dijadikan nilai yang baik itu sebagai paksi.
2. My sons and daughters, let me begin by reminding you, reiterating a fact that you are familiar with. Sometimes, when I was a student leader or young activist, including Zambry, who had the stench of imprisonment under the Internal Security Act, we sometimes are not too keen to listen to lectures lamenting the past and giving unsolicited advice. So, I'm not going to repeat that.
3. I'm talking about love, the subject which is very important to the young and often times even to the old. William Wordsworth, a famous English poet in the Romantic period, explained about the beauty, the passion that will not remain that will be lost in the peace of time. This is something that we have to acknowledge. The only permanent feature is promptly a river. "Men may come and men may go, but I go on forever" (The Brook by Alfred, Lord Tennyson).
4. Although sometimes in this challenge of climate change, the river can be dry. But a more pertinent poem by Wordsworth, talk about the beauty and I would relate to the love story among the young. Remember, this happens only once in your lifetime. The teenager, the

young activist. So utilise this to your utmost, learn, have the patience, have the tenacity of purpose, have the conviction that things must change through your understanding and your love for justice and your principled stance in life.

5. Independent mind, critical thinking, not becoming and willing to become lackeys of any groups, but to be independent, to be able to access for yourself through knowledge, through understanding and not to cheap incessant propaganda. Again, go back to Wordsworth.
6. This period is important. Your period. I've lost it. I've transcended beyond that now. I'm no longer a young man, but I can lament about the past and to remind you, use this opportunity, learn as much, interact, but remain steadfast in your belief. Humanity, compassion, freedom and justice go. Because these are universal traits that is sometimes lost because of opportunism, because of sectarianism, chauvinism and religious bigotry of a narcissism.
7. "What though the radiance which was once so bright, be forever taken from my sight. The glory there was once in the flower, the splendour in the grass are but dreams in summer" (Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Early Childhood by William Wordsworth).
8. So, I want to start with that notion. Use that splendour in the grass, use the time and utilise the glory that is still there in the flower. Because when you pass that age, you will then have to repeat Wordsworth all in the past. Remember with a stanza "What though

the radiance which was once so bright, be forever taken from my sight. The glory there was once in the flower, the splendour in the grass are but dreams in summer". I recollected after a long period to may not be in exact sequence, but that happens to be one of the poems that I wrote to Azizah before we got married. You see, those romantic period is important. No, I'm serious. It's true. You can ask her (referring to his wife). That's why she could not avoid but to fall in love because when I wrote it to quoting Wordsworth, I was still ABIM's president. So, she said, amazing that I could still quote a love poem to her (in a joking tone).

9. But what is important in this context, which I addressed to my sons and daughters, is that to utilise this time. Not everyone, we have millions of students, hundreds of millions in this region. Not everyone will have this opportunity to interact, to get to know one another, to experience the exchanges and learn about the other. This is why we differ. Why do you fight the colonial masters? Why do you reject the notion of condescending exploitation and demeanour by expressing such disgust towards the other?
10. So, when we fight colonialism, in the Indonesia against the Dutch, the Philippines initially against the Spanish, then the Americans, the Vietnamese against the French, and then later against the Americans, the Algerians against the French, the Italians against the Italians, the Indians against the British. Because we want to affect change and ensure that we have a better deal.

11. Those of you in this region who are familiar with Jose Rizal, whom I consider as the precursor of Asian Renaissance. Jose Rizal wrote about the indolence of the Filipinos because that is what the Spanish masters tell them. But the colonial mind say that the indigenous tribes are indolent. Lazy. Then, he said, “What about the great trading nation that was once ours? What about a system in place engaging with our neighbours? So, it can’t be pure laziness”.
12. Here in Malaysia, we have a brilliant study by one of the known sociologists, Professor Hussein Alatas, who talks about the myth of the lazy native. To the extent that post-independence intellectuals would subscribe to the idea. The indigenous tribe are essentially lazy. So strong was the incessant propaganda, the indoctrination by the colonial masters that we finally have to accept and adopt. This is consistent with theory is bounded by Abdul Rahman ibn Khaldun in the ‘Muqaddimah’. We talk about a society after a period of decay taken over by more compelling successful civilization would invariably affect those colonised or weaker countries or tribes by whilst rejecting the colonial rule or alien power, would still subscribe and unwittingly adopt many of their beliefs, customs and cultures.
13. Consequently, it is important for the youth to establish their identity. To believe that we have the capacity only if we have the resolve to be fiercely independent, to learn from the East or the West, but not to be subjected to the ideas, policies of our former colonial masters. This is precisely the role of the young. The challenges are different, of course, but you must start with certain core pillars of belief.

14. To be independent, to assert your own identity, to have faith on your faith and moral values, and to promote compassion and justice within our societies. How many of us after being independent half a century or three quarter of a century, still are subjected to a narrow, obscure, racist, chauvinistic ideas, understanding religion be it Islam or Christianity or Buddhism or Hinduism, not in terms of their message to humanity, but an obscure exclusivist idea that would reject the other.
  
15. So, post-independence Myanmar or India, even Malaysia, Indonesia or the Philippines, you still have problems confronting all societies between the majority and the minority, different religious denominations or tribes and this issue must be addressed. You are here majority Muslims, of course that you have Hindus, Buddhist, Christians. Do you want therefore to acknowledge the fact that it is there “Quli ta’arafu” (which means) to understand, appreciate and know one another, or to continue to sow the seed of discord?
  
16. So, my first point is about to utilise your time. They have a purpose in life. Second, is to remain steadfast to your ideals, reassertion of our belief and moral values and protect our independence and not to be subjected by any alien rule. Not only in terms of physical military power, but in the realm of ideas. My third point, of course, to address issues confronting us, the issue of race or religion or digitalisation or AI or climate change is not an issue that the leaders of our countries have to address.

17. The issues that we have to address together. Because in many countries, even in Malaysia, sometimes our leaders failed. You give them the mandate, all the powers necessary and often times which are used to enrich themselves, their children and their cronies. Rampant corruption, moral degradation. You continue to grapple with the problem of abject poverty in the midst of plenty. Countries are rich, with resources and of course industrial development, but the segment of population remain poor and marginalised.
  
18. The youth must stand and speak up and champion the cause of humanity. The sufferings of our people, the marginalised, the poor are our problem, our concern. The destruction of the environment, the corruption in our midst are our concern and we must stand up and speak. Based on certain principles and values. But that's why I emphasised in the beginning, the need to understand and learn, and not to become mere lackeys or agents by any particular group. You must have the understanding. Our society requires energetic youth with ideas, with ideals and principles, who believe in freedom, who believe in justice, who believe in humanity. And together we can affect change.
  
19. It is important to understand this basic notion because we have student activism, but sometimes they can be as corrupt as their elders. We have student leaders, but often times they become part and parcel of racist regime. We have societies even evolve in some religious activities, but they become to support the most orthodox, intolerant form of religious belief. This is what I mean, not what we mean by youth activism. This is a form of mental corruption which the young must understand and must have the resolve.

20. As I said, tenacity of purpose. Encourage your conviction to change. So, share your knowledge, interact as much as possible, act wisely, work diligently, learn as much. My period when I was young, we have to learn much. Comes to you, you have to learn much more. Because in the post normal period, the demand is certainly more challenging. In new areas of discipline, unprecedented and in terms of the pace of change is with the speed that is unheard of before. But you ask me, you still will determine the future.
  
21. So, our duty in Malaysia, for example, that's why I commend Zambry for taking this initiative and supporting your initiative to make in this period. Because what choice do we have? What choice do we have? Do you want to leave politics, policies and the future with the state of affairs? The answer is, of course, unequivocal. Is no. You are truly youthful with aspirations, with idealism. Then you must accept the fact that idealism means clamouring for change, wanting to be more effective, wanting to do better. That's the idealism of youth.
  
22. Youth is not judge only in terms of your age, but your tenacity, purpose, your idealism. What's so useful with the youth who protects the corrupt and condone racist ideology or religious fanaticism? Where are your ideals? Where is your humanity? The character characteristics of youth, its principled stance, believing in ideals, idealism. That's why you talk about idealism of youth. Wanting to do better and struggling. In no way will you condone ignorance and injustice and inhumanity.

23. So that's my central message, beginning with William Wordsworth, remember? "But though the radiance which was once so bright be forever taken from my sight, the glory that was once in the flower, the splendour in the grass, they are all dreams in summer. It will pass". So now my children, sons and daughters, remember. Utilise, do your utmost, believe that Insya-Allah you can do it.
  
24. Not only because you are young, because you stand for certain principles and values. And that's more important in this period of so much hypocrisy and contradictions in our society and in the global community. That's why when dealing with issues, issue of Gaza, for example, I lament. No, it doesn't matter whether you are a Muslim or Christian or Buddhist or whatever. They of course in Gaza majority Muslims and there are Christians. But how is it the world with all this level of sophistication, of talking about democratic ideals, of human rights and suddenly you see without exception on a daily basis, babies shot, women killed, now male prisoner raped, and this is tolerant. What sort of society do you believe? Do you believe in the sort of ideas of your elders? No! Sheer hypocrisy and this hypocrisy must be rejected at all cost.
  
25. So, this is my message to iFUTURE 2024, have that belief and conviction. You want a better Malaysia, want a better Southeast Asia, we want a better ASEAN and Asia and the world. And who would determine the future? It is you, my sons and daughters.

Terima kasih.

Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh.

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