

SPEECH TEXT BY YAB PRIME MINISTER AT THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCES AND TECHNOLOGY ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN “ECHOES OF IQBAL: CHARTING A FUTURE OF RENEWAL AND PROGRESS”

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Date : 03/10/2024

**ECHOES OF IQBAL: CHARTING A FUTURE
OF RENEWAL AND PROGRESS**

**SPEECH BY DATO’ SERI ANWAR IBRAHIM
PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA
AT THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY
OF SCIENCES AND TECHNOLOGY
ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN
3 OCTOBER 2024**

Professors and members of the academic fraternity,
Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

1. At the very outset, I wish to express my deepest gratitude to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. His leadership, wisdom and unwavering friendship have further strengthened the enduring bonds between Pakistan and Malaysia. I am sincerely thankful for the warmth and hospitality extended to me by the government and people of Pakistan

and I hope that our two nations will continue to grow even closer, forging stronger ties for the future.

2. It is a profound honour to be here today in this august university, undoubtedly a beacon of excellence in education and innovation, and I am deeply humbled by the conferment of this doctorate, *honoris causa*. With great humility, and in the spirit of Iqbal, I accept this honour on behalf of the people of Malaysia as a symbol of the deep intellectual and cultural connection between our nations.
3. Since its establishment in 1991, this university has redefined the standards of higher education in Pakistan, being now ranked among the world's top 50 universities under the age of 50. This institution has truly done Pakistan proud.
4. To the students, let me say that your presence at this most prestigious university is a testament to your intellect, dedication and immense potential. Just as Iqbal's philosophy calls for continual self-improvement, your journey here will shape not only your own future but also the destiny of this nation.
5. Let us not forget that this land has long been the cradle of thought and learning. We are not far from the ancient ruins of Taxila where institutional learning already took root over 2,500 years ago. And just over a thousand years ago, in the Salt Range, the brilliant Al-Biruni conducted his ground-breaking experiments. Through his keen observations and mathematical prowess, he measured the Earth's

radius with astonishing precision, coming within one per cent of the modern estimate.

6. The sons and daughters of Pakistan have always been at the forefront of discovery, from the pioneering Nobel laureate Dr Abdus Salam in theoretical physics to Dr Atta-ur-Rahman's groundbreaking research in organic chemistry. Pakistani scientists like Dr Asifa Akhtar, renowned for her work in molecular biology, continue to make significant contributions on the global stage.
7. The pursuit of knowledge is truly timeless in this land. Indeed, the search for understanding extends beyond scientific inquiry into the realm of ideas, where the pen is indeed mightier than the sword, articulating thought and shaping culture. In poetry, it allows for the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" and in prose, expressions of profound insight, penetrating the very depths of the human condition.
8. I am therefore delighted that three of Allama Iqbal's influential works have now been compiled in the Malay language. This compilation was launched earlier today at the Prime Minister's House in the presence of Prime Minister Shehbaz. The thoughts of Iqbal are consistent with Malaysia's philosophy of nationhood, which we call MADANI. At the core, it is a deep commitment to human dignity, social justice, and mutual respect – principles that align harmoniously with the philosophical ideals of Allama Iqbal.

9. The MADANI vision calls upon us to transcend divisions and strive for a future of shared prosperity, moral responsibility, and intellectual renewal. Just as Iqbal spoke of the individual's capacity to transform society through selfempowerment, MADANI embodies the belief in the collective power of communities to shape their destiny, with unity and purpose as their guiding lights.
10. These shared ideals not only unite our vision but also echo the timeless wisdom in Iqbal's deeper explorations of selfhood, religion and modernity – principles that remain as relevant today as ever.
11. In *Asrar-i-Khudi* – “The Secrets of the Self” – Iqbal explores the concept of selfhood. Against the grain of the entrenched Sufi doctrine of fana, expounded by the likes of Mansur al-Hallaj, Iqbal argues that the annihilation of the ego runs counter to the very aim of life itself, which is self-realization and self-knowledge and that khudi – the ego – can ultimately remain undissipated even when in communion with God.
12. What about the lamentations – the shikwa – of the Muslim ummah moaning about their decline and fall in modern times? In *Jawab-e-Shikwa*, Iqbal offers God's reply, highlighting that the decline of the Muslim world stems from its departure from the essential values of Islam. The ummah must return to the fundamental principles of the faith alongside a revival of unity, conviction and proactive effort. As Iqbal puts it so succinctly: *Aql hai teri sipar ish a shamsheer teri* – “Intellect is your shield, Love is your sword!”

13. Iqbal's profound explorations have resonated deeply through the generations, and I believe they take on even greater import in today's world. In his seminal *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Iqbal advocates for the informed evolution of the Islamic tradition. He critiques both taqlid blind adherence to past interpretations and the uncritical acceptance of Western modernity, urging for a balance between iman and aql (faith and reason.)
14. Way ahead of his time, Iqbal warned how blind adherence could lead to the intellectual malaise of the ummah, where uncritical thinking prevails over critical discourse, and where obscurantism and ideological rigidity, take the place of inquisitiveness and conceptual creativeness. As we witness the ummah today, the prevalence of such a mindset continues to be a stumbling block to societal advancement and progress. Iqbal therefore is as relevant today as he was more than a century ago.
15. Iqbal's conception of the principle of ijihad departs from the fiqh-bound legalistic approach, opening up this doctrine to new vistas for reform and renewal, i.e. islah and tajdid. Iqbal deploys ijihad to reinterpret the eternal principles of Islam in the context of modern developments in science, philosophy and metaphysics. It is a bold challenge to both religious scholars and modern thinkers alike: an invitation to bridge faith with reason, and tradition with progress.

Respected professors, distinguished guests,

16. In reflecting on Iqbal's philosophical call for self-reformation and societal progress, it is impossible to ignore the figure who transformed that intellectual vision into political reality: Quaid-e-Azam and Baba-e-Qaum Muhammad Ali Jinnah.
17. If Iqbal inspired the soul of Pakistan, then Jinnah gave it form and direction. His leadership was not born of convenience or expedience for that would be transitory, but born of a profound belief in justice, equality and the inalienable rights of individuals. In the face of immense historical pressures, Jinnah stood unyielding in his commitment to creating a state where all citizens, regardless of their faith or background, would be equal before the law.
18. Steadfast in his commitment to good governance, and emphatic in his advocacy, Jinnah waged war against bribery, corruption and nepotism labelling them as the curses of society which if unchecked would be the poison to bring a nation down.
19. Jinnah's vision of Pakistan as a nation of dignity and resilience mirrors the very principles that Malaysia holds dear as encapsulated in our MADANI tenets, namely, sustainability, compassion, respect, innovation, prosperity and trust. Both countries are committed to the ideals of unity, progress and justice, and this shared commitment has brought us closer over the years.
20. The relationship between Malaysia and Pakistan is deeply rooted in mutual respect and shared aspirations. Over the years, our nations

have grown closer, not only through trade and diplomacy but through the bonds that unite our peoples.

21. Economically, our bilateral relations continue to flourish. Trade between Malaysia and Pakistan is now nearly USD 2 billion annually, driven by key industries such as palm oil and textiles. There is vast upside for us to enhance collaboration in the halal industry and Islamic finance. We can blaze the trail on innovative financial instruments, fostering greater participation in Sharia-compliant investments and positioning Islamic finance as a global ethical alternative. These efforts must go hand in hand with initiatives in climate change policies, environmental protection and an overarching earnest conviction to make our planet Earth a better place.

22. At the end of the day, we mustn't forget that our economic fundamentals must remain strong and robust to withstand the "slings and arrows" of global uncertainties and challenges. And this must include instituting all the requisite structural reforms no matter how unpopular they may appear at first blush. While good and effective medicine may be bitter and hard to swallow, the cure it brings and the fruit of our labour will be well worth the sacrifices.

Professors, ladies and gentlemen,

23. Malaysia and Pakistan must also expand efforts to counter radical extremism and the scourge of terrorism. Through shared intelligence,

strategic partnerships, and joint counterterrorism initiatives, we must redouble our efforts to combat this threat at its roots.

24. The task ahead requires a unified approach that goes beyond military and intelligence collaboration to include educational and social reforms that address the root causes of radicalism and extremism.
25. As we chart a path towards renewal and progress, the roles of youth and women are paramount, and it is essential that Malaysia and Pakistan work together to promote their contributions. We must nurture the inventiveness of the youth of Pakistan to empower them to take their rightful place as the innovators of tomorrow. Equally inspiring is the role of Pakistani women, whose contributions span various sectors such as education, healthcare and the creative arts, bringing global attention to their courage and resilience.
26. This collaboration will not only uplift our communities but also place Malaysia and Pakistan at the forefront of progress in the Global South. We cannot continue to allow ourselves to be disadvantaged by the financial architecture of Bretton Woods nor suffer in silence as we bear witness to the breakdown of the so-called rules based international order.
27. Let us unite to close the gap between the Global North and South and create a future where knowledge and opportunity are shared freely and equitably.

28. Our responsibilities extend far beyond development. Today, as the genocide in Gaza continues with impunity, with a new chapter of bloodletting and carnage unfolding in Lebanon, we are reminded yet again of the barbarity, depravity and utter cruelty of Israel. We must stand unwavering, demanding an immediate end to Israel's killing spree.
29. As we boldly go forward, shaped by our ideals, let us reflect on the timeless words of Allama Iqbal from his poem "Other Worlds Exist Beyond the Stars":

"You are an eagle, flight is your vocation:
You have other skies stretching out before you.

Do not let mere day and night ensnare you,
Other times and places belong to you.

Gone are the days when I was alone in company –
Many here are my confidants now."

30. Malaysia and Pakistan must work together to fulfil this promise – a future of renewal and progress. Let this be our legacy.

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Source: <https://www.pmo.gov.my/2024/10/speech-text-by-yab-prime-minister-at-the-national-university-of-sciences-and-technology-islamabad-pakistan-echoes-of-iqbal-charting-a-future-of-renewal-and-progress/>