

**OFFICIATING SPEECH BY PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA :
SABAH INTERNATIONAL BLUE ECONOMY CONFERENCE 2024**

By : DATO' SERI ANWAR IBRAHIM

Date : 19/10/2024

OFFICIATING SPEECH BY

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PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA

AT

SABAH INTERNATIONAL

BLUE ECONOMY CONFERENCE 2024

(SIBEC 2024)

19 OCTOBER 2024 (SATURDAY) | 12:00 PM

SABAH INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTER,

KOTA KINABALU, SABAH

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh dan

Salam Sejahtera

Alhamdulillah,

Nahmaduhu Wa Nusalli Ala Rasoolihil Kareem

The Honourable Datuk Seri Panglima Haji Hajiji bin Haji Noor,

Ketua Menteri Sabah;

Deputy Chief Ministers Of Sabah;

The Honourable Datuk Phoong Jin Zhe,

Minister of Industrial Development and Entrepreneurship and Co-Organising Chairman of SIBEC 2024;

The Honourable Federal Ministers and State Cabinet Ministers;

The Honourable Tan Sri Dato' Sri Shamsul Azri bin Abu Bakar,

Chief Secretary to The Government;

The Honourable Datuk Seri Panglima Sr. Haji Safar bin Untong,

The Sabah State Secretary;

Their Excellencies Ambassadors and High Commissioners;

Profesor Dr. Gunter Pauli,

The Founder of The Blue Economy;

Gunter Pauli is of course the renowned scholar who has been pushing this agenda and has given this founded this Blue Asian first, first the theory and

the strategy and pushing the agenda forward. Thank you very much for your presence.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. We are of course delighted to have this initiative by the Chief Minister and the state government. This beautiful land below the wind has now reached a level that is impressive that you are now wanting to continue to be associated with the zeitgeist, with the challenges of the times.
2. Now Blue Ocean Strategy as you know is a new strategy. There has been of course in the last few decades of course, but then been pushed as a new agenda during this post normal times. You are breaking into a departure from the conventional view of economic development and progress. You're looking at your own strength and resources. What do I mean by post normal times is a period of uncertainty. We have faced crisis and crises one after another, which have brought so much chaos, complexity and full of contradictions. You have issues that has not been seen to challenge authorities states from migration to climate change to civil strife and civil wars, which would warrant the leadership to take a bold and courageous step, not only taking account of the problems of the past but to be able to anticipate and insya- Allah overcome.
3. Because the problems are not unique, it's not separate, it's not sectoral, it's not as necessarily regional. It is happening all together at

one time. What is termed as simultaneity, challenging us simultaneously. If you talk about climate change is in Africa, is in Asia, is in Europe and is in Sabah. You talk about migration, the problems of legal, illegal immigrants, it is in Sabah, it is in Selangor, it is in Europe, and in the States. You talk about civil strife, it is happening much more elsewhere. You have seen it in Gaza and Ukraine. We pray to Allah SWT that this region remains safe. But the challenges are real. That is why we have to take additional effort to think beyond existing policies, challenges and go beyond.

4. Now, Blue Economy Initiative is of course a new focus and not all countries or societies or even states in Malaysia can benefit from this Blue Ocean Economy. Well, in a small way, yes, but you are blessed, this state, the great Sabah, can be greater if you focus on these issues.

5. Now this is what we call a broader inclusive sustainable development, which I unveiled in the Budget yesterday. Our policy to enrich ourselves and each other. If there are issues, problems, we discuss, negotiate and interact with one another. I've listened and yesterday in the Budget speech I made specific reference to some visits that I've made in the last few months. Was thinking about the new economy and the budget. I was at Lahad Datu that realized that still issues unresolved about customary land in a Felda area and after consulting the Chief Minister, we immediately came up with a decision to resolve the problem of the customary land in Tambisan, Felda Lahad Datu. I've observed the tenacity, the courage, the patience of the settlers and the poor families to withstand the onslaught of the perpetrators in Lahad Datu, that resulted in so much economic hardship and loss of lives. And it's interesting for me to know then. In the case of police

personnel, army personnel losing their lives in Lahad Datu, the people of Semenanjung, but in Semenanjung, during some of the earliest commissions, we have bold, courageous Sabahans and Sarawakians losing their lives to protect one another. And this I salute to those, not only them but their families, for the support and the resolve to defend Malaysia as a whole.

6. So when you look at this, we are not talking about differences, we are talking about strength. Where do I learn? I learnt from Lahad Datu. Where do I get my some of my ideas for the Budget? Of course from the experts. But I can't underestimate the importance, the wisdom of the folks, the rural folks and those in the hinterland. I've looked, talking to the children and my grandchildren in Sekolah Kebangsaan Lahad Datu, Felda. They realized, to them, what can we offer? They see us with so much expression of affection, love and respect. And we have to then reciprocate and understand that we have a responsibility not only to our immediate children and family but the entire children in this country.

7. Where did I gather that spirit? then idea? Lahad Datu. That's why I said this, a microcosm or the issues affecting the country, security, quality of education, public health, basic infrastructure, which is of course lagging behind as compared to many other districts in the country. But more pronounced, which is relevant to our discourse today is the economic fundamentals. And that is where our colleagues have decided to focus on our strength in the past decades, Sabah talks about nothing else except timber. Now you're talking about industrial production, food security and now Blue Ocean Economy to resolve part of the problem. And I believe as stated by my colleague, Chief

Minister Hajiji that we are clear. There's clarity in the policy, of course, premise upon clear commitment, desire to work together and I've seen this in Sabah. Congratulations not only to him, but the entire team.

8. There is of course political stability in the country. We are fortunate and some of the problems affecting national politics and economy would invariably affect states, including Sabah. So we are fortunate and after somewhat years of turbulence in the political arena, we have in the last two years found political stability. But I always question political stability is not the answer. The answer is to have good governance by responsible leaders, rid this country of corruption and laxity, abuse of power and with that political stability we have crafted policies. Their policies that would benefit everyone and to cater for the interests of every single region in the country. That is why I've assured, I mean the Chief Minister and my Cabinet colleagues are here, Armizan, Ewon, Deputy Ministers, that in the Cabinet we make no apologies, no issue whatsoever what is required by any state, by any community to be deemed as fair and just. We will continue to support without fear or favour. And this we have done and we have is reflected yesterday's Budget.

9. Now, with the clarity of policies, political stability, clarity of policies, then we can embark on these programs. Now, in the last few decades, nobody talked about energy transition or more so energy from the ocean, hardly except for the energy to get this sailing boat across. But now, these are new ideas and our capacity to absorb them to get our universities, including university in Sabah, to get our colleges, our experts to be directly involved in this series of discussions. So, I'm

thankful that so many of representatives from universities and colleges are also present to make sure they do participate and support this endeavour to make Sabah an important part of this nation, economically strong and viable.

10. Now the challenges of course, a year, we are fortunate as I said, the first year was turbulent too. I mean in the sense of people still are uncertain if this government serious, is it stable? Do we have the courage to undertake the necessary reforms, including subsidy rationalization, which is grossly unpopular, but it has to be done. I've said, for example, our tax base in Malaysia is about the lowest in the region. Can you imagine? Yeah, only the Finance Ministers nodding in agreement. The rest are not too sure. The tax is too tax or not too tax, that's the question. And the cost is and is certainly going to be very...very difficult to absorb by the public. But in reality, the lowest, look at the price of sugar, flour, price, petrol, all these as compared to the neighbours is substantially lower and more so petrol. I mentioned part of it yesterday in the Budget. Now, should we burden the people through increasing the prices? No, because however necessary we should, we should avoid giving the additional burden to the people.

11. Yes. Our inflation is about the lowest, less than 2%. But to the farmers, to the workers, any slight increase is a burden because there's no increase in their salary and their wages. That is why I made that bold decision to start with the highest increase for the civil servants ever recorded in the history of this country.

12. Beginning with an increase December and January and another bonus in February. Why? Because I expect them to work harder and be more efficient and serve the people with all their strength and commitment. And I've seen under the Chief Secretary and The State Secretary that desired push is being carried out with clear commitment.

13. I might thank them too because now the demand for salary increase is over. Now is the time for us to execute to the best of our ability to make sure that our departments are efficient and as alluded to by Chief Minister Hajiji, approvals given speedily. If approvals can be given in two weeks, why must they wait two years or two months or even two and a half weeks? I'll give you an example. A few months back, I decided to open a major housing project in the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur. We call it 'Perumahan MADANI' – MADANI Housing Project, mainly for the B40 and M40. The normal time for approvals, land acquisition, EIA, JPS and numerous departments would take between 8 months to one and a half years.

14. But I call up the project manager and he said everything's ready. Well, I don't know. Assuming everything's ready, I asked the Municipal Chief and they said yeah, but then we will take time to approve. So I just give a date to launch the project and mind you, the project that normally takes eight months to one and a half years, took only 45 days to complete and I launched that project after 45 days. What is the moral of the story, the moral of the story that is something can be done. We are just damn or plain lazy, irresponsible or corrupt and this country cannot succeed if you have this mentality.

That is why the battle against corruption must be fought with all our strength.

15. We have seen results. Our ringgit is about the best performing in the world. Who can even imagine this two years, three years back? But it can be done if our ringgit can be so. Malaysia is now the hub for semiconductor, Sarawak used to be now one of the energy hub. Now we have this idea from our smart Hajiji Chief Minister wanted to make through Blue Ocean, a new hub for the region and I as Prime Minister will give all the support necessary to make sure the Sabah succeed. That's how we work. Are we competing? No, we are complementing semiconductor mainly Penang, Kulim Hi-Tech, Selangor, Johor now data centre, AI booming in Peninsular.
16. You need that data centre, by the time you get this huge, enormous energy that's cheap and water supply that's going to be very competitive. Of course, Blue Ocean means also fishing. We're going to consider this. How do you imagine with beautiful ocean surrounding us, we have still to import close to 50 more than 50, 60 billion ringgit for food. Doesn't make sense. So both of the ministries and state governments have to push this, as long as you protect the environment and make sure that you don't destroy the environment in the process.
17. Now the other issues of course, tourism. I was just talking to Chief Minister, Hajiji in just few weeks. I say oh how I would love to come here quietly, spend time with my family and grandchildren to visit Sabah. So beautiful, I have seen from video clippings and

documentary. So beautiful. That was my remark to him. Even have a chance. I better spend time here on condition he and the state government will not disturb me during my holidays. But you know that is an objective view. All these years have travelled probably more than half the world, but the beauty, the splendid, exquisite beauty and cultural and scenic in Sabah, believe me, is unrivalled compared to many parts of the world.

18. A few months back I was in Vladivostok on the invitation of President Vladimir Putin and then during the Q&A with him on stage and the Chinese Vice Premier was asked and I tell him my answer was the our beaches of scenic beauty to me. I said is splendid, exotic, aesthetic and unrivalled compared to many parts of the world. So Hajiji have to do something to give me some commission for promoting Sabah and the beauty of Sabah.

19. But the commission is hard work and commitment and build up this state as a great part of this country. But otherwise, I intend to initially to also repeat some of the programs and projects that we have passed. I know this also has been expressed by many of us. I wouldn't do so because you only know that as a state, this is a big state and many areas are still considered to be underdeveloped and we have spent huge funds for the Pan Borneo project, which is Alhamdulillah finally ongoing. It's almost complete in Sarawak, a bit more push needed for Sabah. But please appreciate the fact that in this yesterday's budget, the allocation for Sabah is the highest ever recorded in this country.

20. Is it able to resolve most of our issues or problems of underdevelopment, schools, hospitals, conditions? No, but it is a bold attempt and we will continue to do that. Your task is to make sure there is implemented efficiently, transparently. We don't end the unnecessary losses due to delays unduly an inordinate delays and waste commissions and corruption.

21. That's now your responsibility to make sure that it works and work as a team because Sabah is also showcase multiracial, 30 ethnic groups, multi religious back and work with 'ihsan' with compassion, with respect as a great family. So thank you very much Chief Minister and the state government for giving me that opportunity. I wouldn't expand too much on the issue of Blue Ocean because the experts are here.

22. So one thing you must learn in politics, governance and leadership, deal with subjects where you have expertise or understanding, where you have experts around, let them explain because they can do better than you. That's how I learn politics. You have to have the humility and you know, I've said this before that one of the great English American poet that I admire, T.S. Eliot, when he talks of humility, he says precisely this "the only wisdom one can hope to acquire is the wisdom of humility. The wisdom of humility is endless."

23. Jika ada sesuatu kebijaksanaan yang boleh dirungkai oleh manusia adalah sifat rendah diri, tawaduk kerana sifat rendah diri, humility dan tawaduk itu tidak ada batasnya kerana tawaduklah kita

anggap kita perlu bekerja lebih baik walaupun kita mendapat pujian menggunung, kerana rendah dirilah kita akan bertanya dan mengundang pakar-pakar mendengar, kerana rendah dirilah kita boleh turun ke kampung dan desa dan pedalaman, ke Kampung Melayu atau Kampung Cina atau Kampung Kadazan dan faham bahawa ada kebijaksanaan dari mereka yang harus kita pelajari.

24. So thank you again and I'm confident that the vision that we embrace today to be followed through, through firm commitment and resolve and for this state particularly for the public servant to ensure that programs and projects are transparently, effectively and efficiently implemented.

Terima kasih.

Assalamualaikum wahrahmatullahi wabarakatuh.

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Source: <https://www.pmo.gov.my/2024/10/officiating-speech-by-prime-minister-of-malaysia-sabah-international-blue-economy-conference-2024/>