

SPEECH TEXT BY YAB PRIME MINISTER: PROGRAMME MEET ANWAR @ IIUM: A SPECIAL HOMECOMING

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Venue : MAIN HALL, IIUM CULTURAL CENTRE (ICC), IIUM GOMBAK CAMPUS

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**MAIN HALL, IIUM CULTURAL CENTRE (ICC),
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Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh.

1. I have on several occasions my reference to Saidina Ali bin Abi Thalib R.A., always talks about 'lazzatul ma'rifah', the level of knowledge which is ma'rifah, which is wisdom, which can decipher between the right and wrong, al-haq and batil and we have now information surplus your mission, but not all information that we see and learn from the social media, from the computers and AI, not all information are knowledge and not all knowledge constitute wisdom. So, the challenge of the education is to make sure that students have the information and the knowledge and be able to decipher what is right and wrong.
2. One of the great inaugural speeches of Kennedy (JFK), not that we agree with many of his foreign policies, but I think what was considered right at the time was that when he said assimilation of knowledge for the dissemination of truth. There's very strong value subscription there, assimilation of knowledge. But to do what? When you need knowledge, yes, it's knowledge and wisdom for what? To disseminate truth, justice and what is right. And that's the major challenge not only in Malaysia, but entire Muslim world and the world at large.
3. I made reference this morning about this trust deficit. We call ourselves democratic. Are we really democratic which talk about expressing justice? Is it true? You should question and combat corruption, which is a major problem. I've always felt that the failure

of governments all over the world, various forms. Here we talk about blatant corruption. In some countries they disburse funds to build houses or bridges, funds were disbursed and finally, what appears is probably a small breach.

4. In the United States, if you read, for example, Fukuyama's latest work on the political system and criticism, not his earlier works. I'm talking about the latest where he talked about democratic accountability, but he also made reference to institutionalized corruption at K Street, where you have strong number of the very rich and powerful conglomerates and made so much money and wealth and influence policies. There is no blatant corruption, but there is institutionalized corruption. Policies are made to satisfy the dictates, the demands of the elite and the very rich. So, you have finally what Stigley said, the 1% versus the 99% may be quite an exaggeration, but still you can see gross disparity.

5. So, when I talk about knowledge, whether it's economics or politics, where you have role political scientists here in the making or technology or science, the fundamental values of freedom, justice, human dignity must be there, and that stems from values. And this is not something new or peculiar to Islam. Of course, it's strong Islam because Islam stands for peace and justice and and we go for Jumaah prayers today, for example, is always stated repeated every week in the khutbah and the sermon, innallaha ya'muru bil adli wal ihsan, justice and virtue, there's a pronouncement from Al Quran. But the test is, of course, from the action.

6. This is precisely the reason why I say students must use the opportunity to acquire knowledge. There's no point having urge university and you don't make full use of the facilities in the library, internet connectivity. There were some problems with the past. We have tried to resolve that. Have we resolved completely Internet connectivity as well other. Because I got to check, you know, normally when I go to Friday prayers, I mean young boys, you know, 12 to 13 years old, ask them about their school. Where are you from? What is school? The level 3 all right, yes. The teachers attend classes, yes, but maths teacher was absent. Immediately I texted the Ministry of Education. So, the ministry was shocked. How come I know about these things? Will you ask this interaction if you are stuck with all the protocols and formalities, you can never get the right address. So that's why the Menteri Besar are having difficulty because I get the report and I'll text him or WhatsApp him.

7. So, what I'm suggesting is the education where you acquire or assimilate knowledge. But you must remember the assimilation of knowledge is for you first. To really assimilate, must use the facilities. Mind you, you'll never get this chance, not necessarily in your lifetime, morning to evening to night, where you can really all the time in the world to acquire knowledge, to assimilate knowledge you won't. My personal experience, I don't have the time as I had when I was in university, but I had a special privilege which many of you will not have. That is, I was in prison for 10 years and that privilege was fully utilized to read and read and read. I've mentioned to many my friends that I've read of course, the Quran to memorize, not most of it, part of it, the hadith 4 1/2 times, the entire works of Shakespeare with copies of notes. I read, for example, Doctor Zhivago or War and Peace, or the great poems of Anna Akhmatova. Of course, the great

classics of the West and the East. I re-read even Bhagavad Gita and the Chinese epics Romance of the Three Kingdoms. You wouldn't have a chance to do that, but you think here you want to do it. You can always do something nasty. We'll put you in prison and you can read now. Of course, there's no option. So please take this seriously.

8. Yes, you need the facilities we will provide you. Yes, the university is the university. Unfortunately, I remember coming here in 2018, after the height is over more than two decades. As you know, I was not able to enter speak to you the last two decades. You may not know that I was able to teach at Georgetown, give lecture to Harvard or lecture at Saint Anthony's, Oxford University. I cannot enter any of the local universities. It's okay, this is the past, but now, then after us, it's true. Osman lamented what he believed, what need to be done immediately, and I agree. So, I think we have a proof, actually, it's about 30 over million Ringgit just for this sort of the university. I think you never clap until the money comes.

9. Now, so back to the fundamental issue about assimilation knowledge. That's why when we talk about an intellectual, many claim to be elitist intellectuals, but sometimes we have a problem why this university in the first place. Osman made reference to my first letter to the then Prime Minister. I think about, you know, Deputy Prime Minister or the director of those days, there was a period of emergency, I think National Emergency Councillor Tun Razak. I think probably in 1971, I wrote a letter as president of the students, Islamic Students Body. This you should set up at Islamic University. Of course, I was not able to articulate the vision as well as I can do now, but I thought Islam is not a belief and the concept of education is not really confined to

some ritual, some very traditional conservative views. I thought Islam must be also other than the ritual, the solat and the zakat is also to promote peace and justice and understanding in humanity, not to sow the seat of discord and differences. You see, in the Muslim world, we talk about here, Malaysia is 60%, is a majority Muslim country. Islam is the religion of the federation. But we have more than 40% non-Muslims. We have to deal with them. You want me to be hero by just abusing the non-Muslims? Yes, I'll be hero among the Muslims as many of my friends in the opposition does. But is that the right thing to do first? Is it an Islamic thing to do? What do you have rahmatan lil'alameen mean when you propagate hatred, racial racism, fascism and discord? So, you must remember you may be in Islamic university, but here the Islamic university is to promote the true understanding of Islam. Not so hatred for the others is understanding is Lita'arafu appreciation and after knowing one another. And that is what we mean assimilation of knowledge.

10. Don't just assume and I must remind you some some of the lectures. Of course, you come from a different society, so much the civil war and hatred and discord. But is it you are dealing with a different environment? We don't want that discord. So, I must remind why as we welcome or you are here to present to me an opportunity to promote the right understanding the religion because otherwise you have the ISIS and Al Qaeda, which is of course not a service to Islam. They are doing this service because the West understand Islam from the axis of evil. Remember the famous President Bush view of the 9/11? First, Reagan where axis is very well of the communism, the Soviet Union. Then you have axis of evil of the so-called extremist Islam which forms a small minority. Now, I want to stress this point

because we also have the problem internal dynamics within the Muslim community.

11. Mona is here, the daughter of our great friend Abu Hamid Abu Sulaiman, who I persuaded him to come here as a rector of the university and had immense contribution to the setting up of the university. After a bitter quarrel with me, I was Minister of Finance and he just said, you want an International Islamic University, or you want a village university? I said, yes, ya akhi, but we need the funds. And why you finance minister for? This Saudi is a tough guy. I said I am Minister of Finance for the whole country, you know, not for the Islamic University alone. But I must really thank him, may Allah bless his soul, because for his continued harassment, because he believed in the cause, if you want to have university, then better be the center of excellence. You want to have university in Islamic University, according to Abu Hamid, it is not just any university. The curriculum, the message, the graduates you produce must be different, more knowledgeable, more articulate, more tolerant, wiser and not having this problem, hangover of the extreme views, intolerant and preaching hatred every day.

12. I have this problem too. Of course, not too many, fortunately Alhamdulillah, but we have the time. You have the freedom to use the social media. What do you do? Abuse, full of deceit, full of hatred in the name of Islam or the Malays? I'm a Malay, I'm a proud Malay, I value the cultural heritage of the Malays and the Malacca Sultanate. But I thought the Malays have this beautiful. No, I see cultural views in terms of tolerance of the accommodation, accommodating other views, respecting differences, not racism, was not one of them. Even

the height of the Malacca Sultanate? You have great brotherly engagement with the Chinese that we can have a Bukit Cina in the Malay world. Can you imagine during them like a Malacca Sultanate, you have a Chinese hill that you do you name no resentment.

13. You see, there's a difference. So, you must realize that when I talk about assimilation of knowledge, you must be able to understand the comprehensiveness of the knowledge. All right, now I will end shortly. So, allow you for time for questions. Obviously, they have a lot of time but but I would end with this. Assimilate, remember all forms of knowledge and this university is unique, it's international, you have all colours and all cultural backgrounds. But remember, you want to present unity, this knowledge. This is the most tolerant university, respectful of the others. We will not tolerate this, any attempt to sow discord and hatred. We will not survive as a nation. Malaysia will only survive if we promote peace and justice, justice for all. If I talk, for example, my first year in office as a Prime Minister, I said first deal with the schools, look at the lavatories, atrocious conditions. That's not why education is. But to me it's all schools, Malays schools, Chinese schools, Tamil schools, rural heartland, the urban poor, all are being handled.
14. Then I said we can't deal with the issue of poverty in totality but we can deal with hardcore poor, those who wouldn't have enough money to buy school uniforms or milk for the children. I said I don't want anyone to suffer that fate, that we use every resource at our disposal to deal with this, using government funds, Zakat, whatever, no exception. It can be the vast majority of the Malays and the indigenous people and the Indians or the ethnic Indians in the estates

or some of the Chinese in the squatter area who are poor. They are all our citizens. And that is to me the strength of Islam, that we preach peace and justice for all.

15. That was really I'm finished. And then finally, I must say this, that when you graduate, go back, but remember, you have to excel, of course, in AI, in digital, in science, in arts, in liberal arts, in Islam, in the Shariah, whatever. But you must continue this mission of peace and justice, human dignity.
16. Thank you very much. Again, you are invited to ask questions. No need formality. You can call me Uncle Anwar Pak Cik Anwar, it doesn't matter. But just ask questions. No restrictions. Those days you ask questions; there's a people from the intelligence or the Special Branch will take down notes and you get into trouble. I can guarantee you, you this is a free country. You are free to express yourself, right?

Thank you.

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