

**PUBLIC LECTURE AT MOSCOW STATE INSTITUTE OF  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS UNIVERSITY (MGIMO)**

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**VERBATIM TEKS**

**SYARAHAN UMUM PM DI INSTITUT HUBUNGAN ANTARABANGSA  
NEGARA MOSCOW (MGIMO)**

**15 MEI 2025 (SELASA)**

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Thank you to MGIMO, Faculty, Ministers, Excellencies and my dear students.

This is the honor to accept this on behalf of Malaysia? is there an honor for all Malaysians and peace-loving people of the world who believe in thus this in peace and accept humbly, thank you very much. I didn't realize you surprised me with this, but it is of course a rare honor and it would be taken as a major challenge for us to lift to the aspirations of this great university and more so to embark upon a journey which is very critical for mankind.

We have lost the sense of honor, dignity, human values and the respect. And it is a challenge mainly to young, to do our utmost to assimilate knowledge, imbibe the know-how, the new disciplines of digital transformation and artificial intelligence and then need to transform our societies through energy transition, at the same time imbibe ourselves strong values.

The Russians talk about the Russian soul and it is very consistent with our Madani framework. Yes, we have to affect change, this where living in a collaboration, unprecedented times, the pace of change is fast and unprecedented. The new technology demands us to be more creative and human beings we more ingenious, but we to never lose our soul of dignity, of human values and respect for one another, of different creed, different cultures and civilizations.

Incidentally, I had a great meeting with President Vladimir Putin. We are here on his invitation, with my colleagues and exchanges from a very important international leader to a relatively smaller country in ASEAN. But we accorded the sense of respect, of equality, in the level of comfort and this is what need to be promoted in the world. We don't believe in unilateral decisions and display of power and arrogance. We need to showcase that every community, every country because small, rich or poor must be given the respect and recognition.

I therefore, take the support in the great University MGIMO to thank the people of Russia for that sense of recognition and respect and belief that we have to work together. We can only work together when we do respect the differences, cultures, religious and of course the incident there was this joke

about the throne and President Putin in more relaxed manner. I don't see him relaxed many ways, but yesterday he was relaxed. He was asking me, he said Prime Minister Anwar, you see the three thrones, the three seats in that throne, of course I see the emperor or the Tsar is in the center, and the Tsarina probably on the right, probably on the right, so he said on the left, second wife, then he laughed.

He said, you see you think as a Muslim only talk about wives. I said no, no, no, no. I said, I maintain, I still have one wife. I don't encourage people to have too many wives is tough enough to control and discipline one wife. Don't tell my wife that, please. So, he said, no, on the left is the mother, the queen mother, whatever. And then he on the way to the press conference, he whispered, he said, can I tell this story? I said what story? About the wife? but this is President Putin who I reflect to be very stern and serious. So, I said, of course, Mr President, I wasn't sure how he's going to tell the story.

So, after the initial remarks on trade, investments and artificial intelligence, energy transition, collaboration, higher education and language, etc, he said to me, I'll say it, so then he went on to say that and of course it's viral. And then it's interesting enough, I had to respond because my wife sure will followed that, I've been in trouble, I response and said not all Muslims share that view, of course it's permitted, but I still maintained, I have only one wife.

So, we did the two of us with the three throne our seats and then he said, you know something, I rarely joke in public, I said, well, that shows the human side of Putin, and I'm sure we rejoice that and I feel, of course,

extremely glad that we have nice, very engaging and trusting and feel that, you know, we can be true great friends. So, until August well for the Russian Federation, Malaysia and of course I will share this with my colleagues in ASEAN.

But our discussions will relate to what Rector Tukhonov mentioned, to enhance our bilateral relations also to focus to the young, exchange of students, or professors or researchers and then to get students here and Russian students also in Malaysia. We have now close to 400 Russian students in Malaysia, and of course 700 Malaysian students here and many of my colleagues from ASEAN countries have also sent and continue to do so. And thank you very much for having the Bahasa Malaysia or Malay language instruction here in this MGIMO and as you know, at the University of Malaya, we also have Russian language instruction. I don't follow Russian, unfortunately, but I think the need for us to focus many talks when we talk about bilateral relations, this is just not about politics and diplomacy and trade and investment, these are pivotal.

Yes, countries have to ensure that their fundamentals, economic fundamentals be strong, but human values cannot be ignored. That's why as I've said, in all my years from I was a student and many years I spent in prison. I took a lot of time and interest in reading all the great works of Russian thinkers and literary giants.

Yesterday at the Metropole Hotel I was in the Chekhov room, and then going there I saw the Turgenev room and Tolstoy and for the information of rector I must say that we have also encouraged our translation bureau to translate some of these great work.

Where else can you find a country with such culture and tradition able to produce the remarkable, phenomenal work of literature, of understanding human strength, brevity, tragedy and humanity at large. I mean reading the works of Dostoyevsky, Shekhov, Tolstoy, Pesterna, the poems of Anna Akhmatova, etc. I mean would enrich not only the soul of Russia, but the soul of humanity, which is now terribly lacking.

And this is consistent what we talked about, polylog, among civilizations. How do you serve the world without any attempt to understand one another, of thinking that you represent the best and therefore tend to be condescending towards the rest. So, polylog among civilizations is not about erasing other cultures or distinctions, it's about recognizing the strength of one another. That's why it's used to say this post-normal times often we ignore the important of this values, intrinsic values of humanity and justice of respect. Even how we look at the issues in the world today. You find, for example, like the devastation of Gaza with hardly any effort to redeem the problems and you can see, for example, the debate when you talk about how do you deal with Ukraine and you deal with Gaza. This contradiction is unacceptable.

That is why said in my remarks, I say how is it that 2 killed in Ukraine is a disaster and 40,000 killed in Gaza is a mistake? So, this contradiction must end. I told President Putin that we look forward to this success of the negotiations taking place in Istanbul today and we support all efforts initiative to resolve this amicably and peacefully.

No country should be used to support design of others. We have to have the patience to deal with it. With President Putin I even embark one very

sensitive subject, the shooting of MH17, the Malaysian plane that caused 43 deaths of Malaysians. I mean I should say unless you are a true friend, you can't discuss this and I raised this question as a true friend. I said how do I respond to this UN report and mind you, President Putin shows so much, I mean a great concern of this tragedy. And told me in very clear terms, we should get to the bottom of it. Any international effort to resolve this must be done professionally, scientifically. And of course, I would accept that, that is a precondition. But to my mind for I mean a small, emerging country economy like Malaysia, why do I get discouraged to ask the President Putin? because I trust him as a friend and his response was to me extremely helpful. There is no question, it's a major tragedy. There's no question that we will get to the bottom of it. We will give all the cooperation to find out the truth behind this tragedy.

Now, but of course you must have credible institutions, independent, professional institutions, and it is very complex because countries sometimes expect us to be hard and divisive.

So, I'm just sharing with you one episode which is clearly a way where we can work among nations to secure ultimately through peace and I am very fortunate that come from a region, Malaysia and ASEAN the most peaceful sub-region in the world and ASEAN the most vibrant economically fastest growing economy in the world. Why? we put peace in the region. We establish extremely close relationships with the leaders.

Any issues, say Myanmar, we say, well, we have to find consensus, when I decided to go to Bangkok to meet the Military Junta and the opposition Prime Minister, the two Prime Ministers in the same country, I consulted

all leaders of Asia. Can I do that? Because there was a terrible earthquake that they need to have a ceasefire, then we need to humanitarian efforts and without exception. All of them, Singapore, Philippines, Brunei, Indonesia, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, all said please proceed.

And after that, I immediately call them to tell them about the level of success and engagement that we have. So, I'm not saying that this is due to one country or Malaysia. No, because of this trust and comradeship and engagement between the leaders of ASEAN. I'm very fortunate to be given this trust to coordinate the efforts.

So, you remember in 'Fathers and Sons' by Turgenev. We sit in the mud, my friend, and reach for the stars, quotes. This captures the human condition grounded in struggle. We sit in the mud, yet reaching with ideals, something higher. This is the brutal reality of the world but also more importantly enduring promise because we are living in so much tensions and distrust despite the so-called initial post war, post-cold war initial security understanding you still have a problem.

Now let us take a the great Dostoesky in crime time and punishment. I am testing the Russians. All is in a man's hands, and he lets it all slip from cowardice, that's an axiom. It would be interesting to know what it is men are most afraid of taking a new step uttering a new word is what they fear most.

So, do not fear innovation, creativity and the preparedness to state what is right, what is just, what is honorable. No, I state this because we are in a

geopolitical flux that cast a shadow not only on security issues but on trade and economic cooperation. You know that's right, can you imagine in 2025 after all the gap and WTO and multilateral arrangements, now we have the rise of protectionism, arbitrary imposition on terrorists' unilateral sanctions and economic decoupling that threatens the entire system that the world has somewhat agreed born.

So, for a trading nation like Malaysia and my colleagues in ASEAN, this is nothing short from existential threat. We are trading nation, we have become one of the hub for semiconductor production chips in the region and it is caused its production both the initially they back and now advance design, advance packaging and suddenly we are threatened with this. So that's why we must continue to promote this sort of understanding for what? We'll order for understanding, for peace, for collaboration, for open trade. This is essentially why you have an international institution like this.

Why Rector to MGIMO I think this morning alone at least six times about the need to enhance cooperation collaboration. After the speech, you will see for the 7th time, but he is saying something which is appropriate and pertinent that the days of protectionism must be over.

So, it must be rule based world order. So, I represent my colleagues in ASEAN fostering this issue, that's why we support CPTPP, RCEP and now with Russian support, mind you, the country that proposed Malaysia's entry is a partner BRICS was Russian Federation. It was President Putin that proposed in last year's meeting and of course supported by China, India, Ethiopia, we are very fortunate. So that's where BRICS stands for and I think we in Malaysia look forward to opening up trade and market

from traditional partners. Notwithstanding what I've said please remember that the United States is the largest investor to Malaysia and our largest trading partner but does it stop us from stating what we believe is right and vulnerable.

Now Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Russian author reminds us to see the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. This reflects the universal truth.

The struggle between our better and worse is not between nations but within each of us. It is the humility they allow as to pursue his interests as I must reiterate the personal sense of feeling satisfaction when meeting for long hours' yesterday with President Putin. This leader of this large, great country would engage with relatively much smaller country and economy with the same human recognition, equality and collaboration.

This, to my mind, is a remarkable feat I wish these two countries together with ASEAN well but we must not be tempted by despair.

History, many of you students learn history, economic history, political history. They are not move by perfection, it is shaped by perseverance and resilience. Leadership is the work of patient conviction to the struggle forward when the path is uncertain, to act with courage when clarity that I am elusive, and to hold fast to hope when it feels most fragile. That is the task before us.

Thank you.

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