

**SPEECH TEXT BY YAB PRIME MINISTER: ASEAN CONFERENCE
ON FUTURE-READY PUBLIC SERVICE**

By : DATO' SERI ANWAR IBRAHIM

Venue : SUNWAY RESORT HOTEL, SELANGOR

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TEKS UCAPAN

YAB DATO' SERI ANWAR BIN IBRAHIM

PERDANA MENTERI

SEMPENA

PERASMIAN PERSIDANGAN ASEAN: PERKHIDMATAN AWAM

BERSEDIA MENGHADAPI MASA HADAPAN

(ASEAN CONFERENCE ON FUTURE-READY PUBLIC SERVICE)

7 OKTOBER 2025 (SELASA) | 12.00 TENGAH HARI

SUNWAY RESORT HOTEL

SELANGOR

Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh dan salam sejahtera.

His Excellency Tan Sri Shamsul Azri bin Abu Bakar,

Chief Secretary to the Government of Malaysia;

His Excellency Tan Sri Wan Ahmad Dahlan bin Haji Abdul

Aziz,

Director-General Public Service Department of Malaysia;

**Heads of Civil Service from ASEAN Member States and Timor
Leste;**

Dan tetamu yang saya muliakan dan saudara-saudari.

1. Saya alu-alukan langkah positif, ikhtiar yang dibuat oleh khususnya KPPA dan pentadbiran awam negara kita untuk bukan sekadar mengumpul kekuatan dalam ASEAN tetapi kesediaan untuk merenung dan mencari kaedah-kaedah baru untuk mempertingkatkan mutu khidmat kita.
2. Dalam penjawat awam ini tentu ada dua tarikan yang menyebabkan ada sedikit pertembungan, satu ialah kekuatan pentadbiran awam atau yang disebut birokrasi itu adalah terikat dengan peraturan dan juga kaedah lama yang harus dipatuhi, yang menyebabkan dia merupakan sesuatu kekuatan institusi.
3. Dalam masa yang sama, dia juga harus merupakan satu agensi yang cepat menangkap isu semasa dan tuntutan perubahan. Dan dengan apa yang diungkapkan oleh Tan Sri KSN sebagai post normal times, tentunya tuntutan itu merupakan satu kewajipan atau kemestian yang mesti dilakukan dengan segera.
4. Jadi, kekuatan dan keupayaan saudara-saudara ialah mempertemukan kedua-duanya. Nama birokrasi dan penjawat awam itu menuntut kaedah dan peraturan dan prosedur dipatuhi, dan ini tentunya terikat dengan kaedah lama. Tetapi, pentadbiran awam dan birokrasi juga menuntut keupayaan kita segera menangkap keperluan melakukan perubahan secara yang agak lebih agresif. Itulah sebab saudara-saudara terkumpul di sini. Jangan tanya saya, saya tidak ada

jawapan (nada berseloroh). Jawabannya kepada KSN, KPPA dan rakan-rakan sekalian.

5. So Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, it is of course a privilege to be among those whose daily work sustains the missionary of our nation. Public service is seldom glamorous, yet it is the unassuming architecture of civilization. As you say, leaders, political leaders come and go, but the institution remains strong embedded, so that the system and governance must continue and so, the challenge or the question before us is how to make that architecture future ready, strong enough to withstand shocks and flexible enough to serve citizens whose expectations are not only constantly changing, but demanding.
6. In my introduction I alluded to the fact that the name bureaucracy by nature means is an established institution with norms and procedures, rules to be followed. At the same time, we have new challenges in these post normal times, where changes are not only abrupt, unprecedented at an unprecedented pace, and must be accelerated to achieve results. And the more so this decade, we have shifting currents, trade frictions, technological upheavals, climate emergency and the growing demand by our society for openness.
7. Everyone has the right to expose, to demand explanation, and we become forcibly more accountable but I would say that Alhamdulillah ASEAN still remains one of the world's most stable region. But as you know, stability alone will not prepare us for the storms ahead. We have now a region of 660 million people and very productive. I mean

productive in the sense that we will have more people soon. So we must act as a network of capable, trusted institutions.

8. The next phase of ASEAN cooperation will depend on how we modernize the state itself and the heart of governance lies morality. Without moral purpose, public servant loses direction, our duty is to empower citizens and ensure that progress reaches every layer of society. A public service that fails to hear the weak or the marginalize forfeits legitimacy. Justice must be guided and must guide our decisions. Progress stripped of compassion becomes dangerous. Development without justice becomes hollow. Sustainability begins with stewardship of the environment, of public finances and of the institutions that hold us together.
9. What we build today should widen the choices of those who come after us. So, in Malaysia, in reference to the MADANI framework, we have tried partly to turn these principles into systems. Digital identity is improving and improving secure access to services. But even then, there was a very pertinent challenge a month ago about the issue of productivity paradox. And I'm pleased that the Chief Secretary has undertaken this as a major challenge to get all the inputs necessary, because we have to respond to this central issue in terms of productivity, in terms of reducing inequality, ensuring that the marginalized and the poor, urban poor and marginalized, are given due regard and consideration.
10. And then, of course, the Energy Transition Roadmap is creating new skills and jobs while keeping our fiscal footing sound. The next step is

of course, to connect these reforms to make government work as one and not many. And this is, of course, a major challenge. The whole setup of the civil service or public service structure is, of course, compartmentalization. And it is necessary to specialize, to focus. But the new norms, digitalization, energy, dictates a new phenomenon — the need to integrate effectively. And that's why I think the understanding of the senior officers is critical, to be able to work not in silos but as an integrated force.

11. But more important, to my mind, is the issue of leadership, both political and the public service. Because leadership today demands moral clarity and the courage to reform. A future-ready civil service needs leaders who think beyond electoral cycles, act transparently, and welcome scrutiny. All these are popular and interesting pious platitudes, but you have to sit in Parliament for a debate. I tell you, it's quite challenging.
12. So, this morning, I must apologize. I'm a bit late this afternoon because there are two programmes imposed upon me which were not in the initial plan. Firstly, in the morning, summoned by the Malay Sultans to give them an update on ASEAN and incoming President Donald Trump's visit and the issue of Flotilla and then some other related national issues, just to brief them. And then, I had to rush to the airport to send off my colleague, the Prime Minister of Pakistan.
13. So, I do apologize. But it happens to coincide with the Prime Minister's Question Time at 10 o'clock in Parliament. So, I wasn't sure whether I was quite relieved (in joking tone), although I cannot

escape because the same question will be raised the following week. But I think it helps in terms of transparency, accountability and allowing members of Parliament, particularly the opposition, to raise issues of concern.

14. Now, back to issue of technology. Technology again, as I mentioned about productivity paradox because technology is reshaping governance from data analytics to artificial intelligence because it's purpose is to make life simpler and service more humane. But, if you read the issue of productivity paradox, it does not necessarily result that way. Sometimes becomes more complex. You don't educate the masses and you insist that they follow certain digital rules. So, it still remains a challenge.
15. Therefore, the next frontier is interoperability. Citizens should share their details once and government should use them responsibly across agencies. Each interaction must leave an audit trail that earns, not demands public trust. Digital government should lighten the citizens' day, never add to the burden.
16. The finest systems mean little without capable ethical people. Public service must become a learning institution, reskilling continuously and holding itself to clear standards of integrity. Independent capability reviews show how a civil service can renew itself through honest self-assessment rather than crisis. An aging workforce should be valued for its experience, mentoring new talent while adapting to new tools and ways of working. I've challenged, for example, the Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs because the

traditional notion of how we look at diplomacy has shifted to a focus on trade and investments. So these shifts would require the civil service to also retrain and expose new talents, new officers to new dictates and new demands.

17. So, I must commend again, for example, the Foreign Ministry for grasping this and taking immediate action to ensure that our young diplomats refocus. Not necessarily refocus, but then extend the focus beyond just diplomacy to the issues affecting trade, investment or the economy.
18. Excellency, ladies and gentlemen, across ASEAN, our administration are reforming with the same purpose. Our shared task is deepen trust, interoperability and capability so that citizens everywhere in our region experience government that is connected, secure and humane. None of us can face climate shocks, cyber risks or health crisis alone. Our resilience will depend on how well our systems learn from each other.
19. Trust, interoperability and capability form new horizons of public service. They require discipline, clear standards, open yet protected data and cooperation that crosses borders and bureaucracies alike. So let us leave this conference with renewed commitment to reform, boldly cooperate deeply and serve with integrity. If we do so, Insha-Allah, history will remember us as architects of a just, inclusive and sustainable ASEAN.

Terima kasih. Wassalamualaikum.

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