

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY YAB PRIME MINISTER: PNB
KNOWLEDGE FORUM 2025**

By : DATO' SERI ANWAR IBRAHIM

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YAB DATO' SERI ANWAR BIN IBRAHIM

PRIME MINISTER

FOR

PNB KNOWLEDGE FORUM 2025

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THE ST. REGIS KUALA LUMPUR

Assalamualaikum dan salam sejahtera.

Yang Mulia Raja Tan Sri Dato' Seri Arshad Raja Tun Uda;

Group Chairman of Permodalan Nasional Berhad (PNB)

Yang Berbahagia Dato' Abdul Rahman Ahmad;

President and Group Chief Executive of PNB

Members of the PNB and ASNB Board;

Distinguished Guests Ladies and Gentlemen

1. Alhamdulillah, kita memanjatkan kesyukuran kepada Allah S.W.T kerana dapat bersama-sama dengan kumpulan dan keluarga PNB kesuluruhannya dalam Knowledge Forum ini yang saya kira penting untuk menentukan arah yang lebih positif untuk melakar masa hadapan.

2. Jadi saya ucapkan terima kasih kepada Tan Sri Dato' Seri Arshad Raja Tun Uda serta Dato' Abdul Rahman Ahmad dan seluruh keluarga PNB, kesemua tokoh-tokoh korporat besar ada pada malam ini yang tentunya lebih arif daripada saya tentang pengurusan Syarikat dan badan korporat.
3. Tetapi izinkan saya memulakan dengan menyatakan bahawa sekiranya negara ini mahu memacu pertumbuhan dan menetapkan satu kedudukan yang lebih baik, dia tidak mampu mengekalkan kaedah atau dasar lama. Ada beberapa yang positif harus kita teruskan tetapi perubahan itu penting.
4. Perubahan itu tidak terletak pada dasar atau yang menggerunkan, umpamanya pada suatu ketika kita bicarakan soal paradigm shift, kemudian kita bicara tentang pelbagai wawasan, kemudian kita bicara soal reform, dan sekarang kita menekankan maksud transformasi. Semua itu penting tetapi ujian-nya kepada PNB dan negara, adalah bagaimana memaknai dalam bentuk pelaksanaannya.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

5. I was alluding to the fact that whilst the issues of paradigm shift, or reform or transformation are critical in charting the new course for a society. Of course, they are experts in the global order while I would be confined to Malaysia. But these terms are at times devoid of meaning unless it is well understood and there are programs introduced to ensure that it is effectively executed.

6. I gave an example in the last few years about paradigm shift. I was then in the government, huge interest in paradigm shifts and that includes of course paperless, because of the introduction of the computer in the system. But you know, the result in some areas is exciting, successful. But in most areas, it is not only paperless, but paper less and in many occasions paper more. So, the term paradigm shift is certainly not what Thomas Kuhn referred to in his great works, because preparedness to undertake phenomenal substantive change, both in terms of policies, directions and the manner we execute these programs.
7. Similarly, now when we talk about transformation, it is critical. When Schumpeter talks about The Gale of Creative Destruction, aftermath of a decaying order, economic order. He made a set clear reference that use these things fall apart, the center cannot hold, to borrow yields dictum. But there must be a clarity in policies and direction.
8. Number two, a team, both political leaderships, the public servants, the private sector, the executives, technocrats who are able to absorb this sentiment and be convinced that in order to propel our economy, champion the cost of this nation and also the direction, there must be this preparedness to undertake the change.
9. But it's easier said than done because in my limited experience you are actually facing this strong resistance. There was an old sociological theory about propensity to change, I think McFadden, I'm not too sure. But propensity to change and resistance to change. Our basic assumption is that resistance to change is probably from

the traditional society less educated. But, from studies, you will find that oftentimes the resistance to change among the top elites, because it is a challenge to the way they are working or the way they are squandering wealth, or the way they understand the principles of governance.

10. So let us remind ourselves the humility to acknowledge, I mean, bringing these top scholars to share with us. The experience to me is very pertinent. We can't assume that we know everything we are living in the post normal times, chaos, complexity, contradictions that we talk about.
11. We are talking about phenomenal change happening in that term called simultaneity. Simultaneously, too many places, too many complexities. But you also realise that people are somewhat confident and settled with the way, the manner they act and devise policies.
12. So, I certainly am happy that PNB, Dato' Abdul Rahman is continuing this tradition, scholarship, like Khazanah did with the Megatrend, to try and reflect and understand new challenges and admitting with all humility that there are limitations and that we need to explore new ideas, new directions, new policies and learn from these experiences of others in order to enhance our capabilities. So let us take this very seriously. Whatever we can absorb, share with the community.
13. Because again we talk about change, my task is of course to start with governance. How do you expect to understand and execute this

transformation? If we are still tied to the issue of endemic corruption and abuse of power. And to challenge the political and social elite or business elite that used to squander with impunity is of course not an easy task because you are dealing with people with influence, with funds, with international networking, with the social media and the media and various instruments of government.

14. You wouldn't be surprised that some in the judiciary or in the prosecution, or in these established agencies and corporate players, like maybe some of you. But this is the stark reality that we face. That is why you see, in the first year we were struggling. People have to understand that we have a problem with huge debt, we have to embark on new policies and we have to restructure some of the economy.
15. Okay, we talk about transformation with AI, digital, but we still need to educate the masses. I mean, Celik MADANI is one, to understand the basics and the importance of investments and savings and to educate the masses.
16. You talk about AI and digital, but you know the problem, one is disconnect. Connectivity, whether we can ensure that those in the privileged areas get the full access and connectivity, as compared to those in the rural heartland and the urban poor.
17. No sane society with the correct philosophy and understanding, humanity and truth and justice and compassion can tolerate the

system that propel economic growth, but condone endemic corruption and endemic or abject grinding poverty in our midst.

18. So, these are basic issues that we have to address. I must say thank you to Tan Sri Dato' Seri Raja Arshad Bin Raja Tun Uda, to Dato' Abdul Rahman Ahmad, and to the colleagues both in PNB and Khazanah and the rest, who have been extremely supportive and helpful. I don't think we could achieve what we have thus far without the total support and commitment.
19. But again, I reiterate the point that we must start with governance. And then, if we can clean the mess, I think these policies can be well absorbed, and we can execute it effectively.
20. I made this surprise announcement in the last fortnight's Budget that due to effective enforcement by the Anti-Corruption Commission, the police, and the tax agencies, we were able to get back RM15.5 billion in two years from leakages, smuggling funds, racketeers, and syndicates.
21. But my question is how is it that we could condone and tolerate this rubbish for decades? And you can follow the debate in Parliament hardly any support, I mean, except from the back benchers, of course. But then, from the opposition, we were being ridiculed.

22. I thought it was mind-boggling. How is it that any government attempt to stop this plundering of national wealth cannot get a national consensus to proceed with such conviction and determination? But let me assure you that we will continue. Alhamdulillah, impressive results.
23. Then the basic question arises. I happen to be the Minister of Finance. We have a problem shortage of funds. Of course, we get PNB and Khazanah to help out with the Sekolah MADANI, Sejati MADANI, fair. But the option from the economics is tax.
24. But my question is a question of conscience. Why must you tax? Because you need revenue. But why must you assume that the revenue that you have collected thus far is well spent, and that there are no leakages?
25. Now we realize that the leakages for the last two years have amounted to RM15 billion. Now why, then, tax? So, I'm not suggesting that we will not ever tax I mean, we will have to. But what I'm stressing is get our house in order. I gave an example for the last decades, we have allocated RM1.1 billion annually just to support the price of chicken.
26. Now, supporting the price of chicken actually benefits the cartels. Two years back, I said no. Call the players the industry players and tell them we will not, not at their expense, they will not lose, but they cannot get funds from the government when they are already making profits.

27. So, we stopped that two years ago. And we saved 1.1 billion ringgit. Why can't this simple policy be implemented as such? The other, of course, is the subsidy rationalization. Electricity we earn between RM4 to 6 billion.
28. Now, recently, RON95, all leaders, all governments, all economists say or suggest that you must have the courage to implement that. Now we subsidize everybody up to RM20, RM30 billion a year Malaysians, foreigners, even the very rich.
29. So, we introduced RON95 rationalization, and in order to appease the general public, I reduced the price for Malaysians. And still, we saved between RM2.5 to RM3 billion. You see, it is in terms of transformation Dato' Abdul Rahman Ahmad, it is transformative.
30. But don't envy me, because it requires courage. It requires broad consensus in the Cabinet and then effective communications. So, I would hope that PNB and Khazanah help us in this where the policy is right, you also need to communicate effectively.
31. Because without good governance, I don't think the other policies will be able to work. Now, in the next few days, we'll have the ASEAN Plus Plus, we'll have Donald Trump, Li Qiang, Narendra Modi, and other Prime Ministers others countries, thus far, I must thank the various ministries, security forces they've been extremely helpful.

32. And of course, I would need your contribution and expertise to make sure that we're able to handle this well. It's not easy. I was whispering to Dato' Abdul Rahman Ahmad, he said, "Is Trump coming?" I said, "Yes, on the 26th. Can you help stand in for me for a while?"
33. So again, we pray to Allah may we achieve good results in this. Because ASEAN, under our stewardship with the motto of inclusivity and sustainability has embarked on the issue of connectivity in the region, and the power grid.
34. And thank you again to PNB for your participation particularly KIGIP, TNB, and PETRONAS of course for this power grid from Vietnam to Peninsular Malaysia, to Singapore, and again from Sarawak to Peninsula, to Sabah, the Philippines, and Indonesia.
35. So, at least, we are able to achieve the two main priorities. But again, within ASEAN, we have been strong in our advocacy in terms of good governance, in term ensuring that the people benefit through these regional arrangements.
36. It's not an M.A.C. you know what that is a Mutual Admiration Club, where we meet and start praising one another. But here, I think we must set a new tradition we meet and stress important issues, policies, directions, and of course, through this transformative framework system.

37. Jadi, sekali lagi saya ucapkan terima kasih kepada saudara-saudara. Setelah dengar Tan Sri Dato' Seri Raja Arshad bin Raja Tun Uda, saya tak terbaca saya punya teks. (PM berseloroh) Dan saya fikir wajarlah saya lontarkan sedikit pandangan.
38. Pertama, menyatakan perlunya transformasi untuk menjamin kelangsungan, kelestarian, dan peningkatan keupayaan negara kita dari segi martabat, harakat, dan darjat.
39. Keduanya, membicarakan bahawa prasyaratnya ialah tatakelola pemerintahan yang harus diterima secara tawaduk kelemahan-kelemahan dan memperbaiki kebobrokan dalam sistem.
40. Dan ini tidak mudah, kerana kekuatan kelompok yang biasa dan amalan lama yang menguntungkan mereka, peribadi, keluarga, dan kroni tidak tentu senang menerimanya. Sebab itu, saudara lihat pandangan dari tokoh-tokoh besar dulunya yang merasa begitu tercabar, dan akan ambil apa sahaja langkah yang mungkin untuk menggagalkan rencana kita.

Semoga Allah memberkati dan merestui usaha kita. Tahniah sekali lagi kepada PNB dalam menjayakan Knowledge Forum.

Q&A Session:

Prime Minister: Why must you choose to ask a difficult question for a start? Very complex.

Moderator: You know me, you know me.

Prime Minister: Well. I try to articulate some of these issues and in the rethinking of ourselves, you see again, humility to acknowledge new challenges, that there are new challenges that you are not able to grasp fully unless you are prepared to learn. And that's why this literacy, cultural literacy, political literacy, and economic literacy to me is vital and critical thinking is important. That's why we are trying to change.

The transformation must begin in schools. It's not just about learning, but also to allow students to participate and think, and critically evaluate mindsets. So, during post-normal times connote again, as I alluded to earlier, chaos, complexity, and contradictions.

Well, there has been chaos and contradictions in the Roman period, fair, but the complexity and the contradictions is happening probably too prevalent pervasive in too many areas at the same time., That's why they popularized the term simultaneity, everything simultaneous, happening. Now, so, the humility to accept for example, people from my generation energy transition is new, digital is new, AI is new.

So, the humility to acknowledge that there are certain issues we have to address. But the fundamental, the core issues that our colleagues at the Permodalan Nasional Berhad (PNB) must also accept, is the fact that the foundation of justice, about compassion, about marginalized societies, these core issues must be addressed.

So, although we talk about post-normal times, such as new issues, global challenges, or tariff introduction which is impacting our society and our economy, the fundamental issues must be addressed. After all, you are talking about transformation for who? For a country? Yes. But for whom? For human beings.

Now, what are human beings without values, without ethics, without understanding a sense of justice and tolerate? And condone protection for marginalized societies, or preach hatred towards other races or other creeds or the religion? These are challenges here and you must acknowledge again. It's not an easy path.

In the West, with all this sophistication of new scholarship and learning intervention, culture, and technology, there is a rise of racism. It's is the Zionism, it's in the far right.

You see how the Palestinians in Gaza. I mean even after this sort of temporary, hopefully Insya Allah success ceasefire, how the peace of the Israeli hostages, and the imprisonment by the thousands of the like semi-slaves that are there to me, it's quite sickening.

So, while we talk about transformation because of the Global AI Center, we must not forget the core values in this new challenge post-normal times.
Arigatō gozaimasu

Moderator: I understand. Thank you, Prime Minister.

In order for Malaysia to reimagine itself, it's not really two choices, I would think ride the wave of change or be swept up by it. You chose, obviously, the former.

Are people expecting miracles from you? Because transformation, in any shape or form, takes time. It takes the support of the rakyat. It takes the support of groups like people here as well and it's easy to pass policies, Prime Minister but it's very hard to have them executed.

Prime Minister: Very pertinent remarks because people expect there's always this very high expectation. But you must also learn first you know, what was the motive of that transformation?

But from all studies, ten years after the revolution including after the reign of terror Robespierre and Jacobins owned certain idealism, extreme demands devouring many of their children in the process.

That is the blind of Hamas, the made someone the same so the challenge is not major pronouncements or platitudes, but to ensure effective implementation.

Now, all independence movements from say Nehru's "tryst with destiny," that India will change in terms of solving the problem of poverty and ensuring freedom; or settle in the democratic revolution in Pakistan and Vietnam but finally the detachment, how you're able to execute, people see the results.

So, there are two poles internal dynamics: Even within our coalition, forces who want immediate change, and forces someone resistance with change. You have to navigate. You are not working in a vacuum.

If you go ahead with those who have no patience except for immediate effective change reform or transformation things will fall. Things cannot hold include I mean to paraphrase what Yeats: “Things fall apart, the center cannot hold.”

We must be reminded. Look at the Eastern European experience post–Cold War. The advantages of the time some chose to have immediate reform, some too slow also failed to navigate.

You see, this time, this is a major challenge but again. We have settled, so there’s no turning back. What we have to do wisely

As my Sheikh told me recently, sabar is patience, wisdom hikmah, tetap, you must stay the course.

Never mind those who lose patience because they want to change the rules, simply devoid of understanding the political play which we have acknowledge. Micro relations for example, micro relations is UMNO, PRS and GRS of course our coalition with DAP, AMANAH and KEADILAN.

So, the process to build that consensus through coalition is pertinent but what is the core principles? Governance must not be compromised.

Although you need to think through step by step. Then to governance and major economic policy changes that follows too.

And the reform, which includes public health, education, and business climate, that will proceed Insya Allah will prevail.

Moderator: I'm glad you brought up the fact about education, Prime Minister, because Gen Z is now the leader of the digital age and they are a force to reckon with. They have their own minds these days, not like when you and I were children, right?

It's a different ball game now. How do you see the best way to prepare for the young people?

Prime Minister: Well, you should ask them anyway.

Leaders, teachers, and parents must learn how to engage. How I was born is different from how my children and their children are different. Now as I grow up one word for my dad was "done."

“Will be done same day, hair cut”. Now, my children say, “Okay, you know be done next three days”. My grandkids to say, “I thought I should show an old photograph, some longer hair but it doesn’t involve character building. There are 101 questions and it’s not done! So probably some call you have to follow, right?”

But otherwise, this sort of engagements is important, well I think they will matured faster.

Our challenge is to ensure they have environmental values, because they mature in the sense of their understanding of society, the access to new technology and social media but there are also some harmful elements that the country and government must provide some sort of guidance in terms of lack of ethics and values.

That is the MADANI framework I’ve been trying to promote strong modernity, yes, new technology, yes everything that required necessary, yes. But again, we need to be reminded that we are dealing with societies with human beings.

And for a multi-racial, multi-religious society such as ours, kids must be given an education that “karamah insaniah”, Allah, God exalted the children of Adam. It is not for us to then show prejudice or arrogance.

Moderator: Prime Minister, you mentioned earlier that this current transformation theme is also a personal transformation for you.

Of the heads of state I've met through the years, what they went through in their lives shaped how they thought and what they did.

I'd like to ask you, Prime Minister you have been through a lot, much more than most people have in their lifetime. What made you who you are today not only as a man but as now the leader of a country?

Prime Minister: Well, more prominent people have made greater sacrifices than me with all humility, of course.

Yes, the imprisonment was too long ten years is obviously too long.

But anyway, to endure that, I made good use of it spent a lot of time in prayers, meditation, and reading thousands of books in those ten years.

But what have I learned? I was that time Deputy Prime Ministers was with black eye and became throughout the world. But I watch some young juvenile cases. The one incident that really affected me personally — I was walking with guards. I was like public enemy number one. All guards. I go to the, you know, from the prison to the courtroom. They will only thank for helicopter. Why is it necessary to portray that you're dealing with very dangerous terrorists or something?

Anyway, once it's open, with the guards out to the car in the court and saw this young black eye. So I just cannot just say hello sisters. I think it's one of

the minutes. But you would want me seen. CCTV. Whatever. So I asked him.

“Ni pasal apa? Why are you here?”

He said, “sikit je buat salah”

“Apa?”

“What happened? Why are you here?”

“I stole a pair of jeans.”

“How long have you been here?”

“Two weeks.”

“When is your trial?”

“I don’t know”

“Do you have a lawyer?”

“No.”

“Your parents come too?”

“Yes, again once, but they can’t afford it.”

When this stole a pair of jeans, a lot of genies, in the political elite stole hundreds, billions from you. And they are promoted from Dato' Seri' to Tan Sri to Tun.

No, I know I'm Prime Minister, be careful with what I said. No, but I mean, I'm human being. How rationalize this, one young guy stole a pair of jeans, to stay there in life, living at that poverty, no lawyers. And we have the system and people. You, come on, don't. I mean, give me the crap that we don't know. You know for a fact how this system works.

So what have I learned? I learned justice. But that's Malaysia. I was in this solitary confinement in lokap. And about 20 yards away was the place where there is this cave of convicted paradise. And so at the time it is probably once a fortnight I will appeal with the prison director to simply get him out of it. So that I know in any way I can bear here. Because if they are weakly cases, they are okay. But many of them just foreign workers who can just throw their couches and goats whenever they came here, exploited by the agents or the companies, and then went to court.

And some of the magistrate, some the works... I don't know what they studied in university. They studied law, but they didn't study justice. They studied technicalities in the law and get sit and tie it. Because they were all given maximum. If you go to a particular court, and still remember, if they happen to send to Kuala Kubu Baru court at that time in the year 1999 – 2000, maximum four years. And I said so what?. I'm not saying they can be excessive. Okay, they did for a while, whatever. But I'm sure it's rage. But why must go maximum sentence.

And so I didn't I will give out of. Apart back within this system. So I'm not saying that we should allow all of you to come and work without permits. But we should be human beings.

So what have I learned? I learned well. I've talked about freedom just all my life. But you understand, said why is it so important to be free, to be just, to have compassion, to be fair, raise to peace.

So Allah has that triumph. It's not easy. It's tough for me, Azizah and children, and friends. But now that I'm the Prime Minister when violence occur, what do I want to do? I want to do the best, that way no one should be able to do that again. May Allah help us.

Moderator: That is an amazing story, Prime Minister. So you would say really that incarceration really made major leading world today? In short.

Prime Minister: I mean, I want the younger generation to be as passionate without needing to go to jail to learn, my case is unfortunate. I had to do that and be all that. But I think Allah has His reasons. That's why I'm saying that I'm not bitter.

People say Anwar are bitter. No, but you continue. I mean, it's okay. It's done. If I am bitter telling hundreds times every seven days. Sometimes how I wish I... it is wrong. You have your due process and you have to move on.

I mean, you are not okay, you like to hear the story, but you're not interested in what happened. You want to know about your future, your family's future, your children's future. What is there for the country.

So let us work together, no? Yes. I've learned this as I share to you. But what is important to my mind is how we then commit ourselves to impress. Enough of this racism, corruption, injustice, and try our level best to affect change.

And again, as I say, change, you move too fast, you think you are the smartest guy on earth. I have some colleagues like that. Nobody else matter. I don't need to negotiate with others. I don't care about coalition. Then you don't govern.

You don't care about coalition team, you don't govern. I think in Dutch, Sukarno used to say, "vox clamantis in deserto" – like crying in the desert. But I don't want that.

I think we should use this opportunity to move. And I think Rahman here, Amir, Faisal, then Rashid are all monitoring this very closely. But I think we have the capacity. We have done it. We are able to do it. And many of you, the leading banks here, the leading companies, we can, you know, that it will make a difference with good governance.

Now, have I interfered? Well, Khazanah, PNB, I happened to chair. Have I interfered in decisions? No! I said yes, new technology. Yes, green

technology. Yes, Bumiputera welfare. Yes, program for the poor. Yes, adopt schools, that's all.

I don't interfere in terms of protecting personal interest. And to me this a remarkable change. If I don't interfere, none of my cabinet colleagues should interfere. The commercial decision is entirely yours. Okay, thank you.

Moderator: Prime Minister, I just have five minutes on the clock with you and I'd like to bring in the ASEAN Forum that's coming up. And the fact that you also just confirmed that US President Trump will be attending, bringing him here to Malaysia. Was that all your hard work?

Prime Minister: Its Malaysia, its ASEAN. I think in the policy we use the term centrality. We are close to China, we are very strong with our neighbours in ASEAN. We work and maintain this traditional relations with United States.

We express some of our views in terms of some foreign policy differences, but we maintain the strong bond friendship with the United States, huge investments, trade with Europe.

And now we are marketing as a trading nation. We are pushing ahead not only with Europe, Asia and America, but also with Latin America and South Africa.

That's why for the first time within ASEAN fraternity and framework, we're having Lula da Silva of Brazil and Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa here. Of course, with Mark Carney, Prime Minister of Canada. It's called ASEAN, but virtually entire Asia is here, representative from EU, Canada, United States, Latin America, Brazil and South Africa. So it's very interesting experience.

Moderator: And what will be your main message to US President Trump when he's here? Behind closed doors, of course.

Prime Minister: We had exchanges phone calls twice. He has been extremely cordial, very, very supportive. He listens quite well. And I think I want to make use of this opportunity, of course, to protect the interests of Malaysia in terms of trade, investments, but also to express some of my personal views on what I think would be good for Malaysia, for the United States, for the world, including the issues affecting Gaza.

Of course, commend him for the effort. Whatever you may say, say with the reservations, you must commend the fact that Trump did a major service in stopping at least the bombings in Gaza.

But our challenge, of course, to ensure that peace prevail and justice prevail and ultimately the legitimate interests and aspirations of the Palestinians be given, be accorded their rights.

Moderator: A final question to you, Prime Minister. Would you like to have a glass of water first? All right. There are a lot of government-linked companies here, very senior people in this room with a theme, transformation. We've talked a lot about a variety of topics. As we leave this conversation, I'd like to ask you — if there was one piece of advice you'd like to give the audience in the room, what would that be? What would you like them to leave this forum with?

Prime Minister: It's time for them to give me advice. But anyway, they do give advice in the quiet, passing notes and giving suggestions. But I think we have introduced some policy shifts. For example, domestic investments through GEAR-uP. And they have been very forthcoming.

And I've talked about, you know, back to basics understanding the entire purpose of the setup of PNB or Khazanah and the various institutions. I think remain true to the core aspirations and improve governance.

And frankly, of course it's my job to monitor, but I must say and commend them for their hard work and their commitment and I'm proud of them, to be associated with them. Thank you very much.

Moderator: Thank you, Prime Minister, for your insights, your reflections, and I hope it's not another 20 years that we meet again. Thank you.

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