

VERBATIM TEXT: SPEECH BY THE HONOURABLE DATO' SERI ANWAR BIN IBRAHIM PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA AT THE TIMOR-LESTE: BUILDING SHARED FUTURE WITH ASEAN DINNER & FUNDRAISING

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THE HONOURABLE DATO' SERI ANWAR BIN IBRAHIM

PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA

AT THE

TIMOR-LESTE: BUILDING SHARED FUTURE WITH ASEAN

DINNER & FUNDRAISING

28 OCTOBER 2025, TUESDAY

SUNWAY RESORT HOTEL, PETALING JAYA

Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh dan salam Sejahtera.

1. Saya ucap terima kasih kepada rakan-rakan saya, Tian Chua, dan rakan-rakan yang lain yang membantu menyelenggara majlis pada malam ini, dan tentunya sebagai satu negara yang prihatin dan secara konsisten mendukung perjuangan rakyat dan pembebasan, kita alu-alukan kepada kemerdekaan Timor-Leste tetapi juga penerimaan rakan-rakan ASEAN sebagai anggota ASEAN yang ke-11 pada kali ini. Terima kasih.

Your Excellency,

2. I just can't believe you are now an Excellency President José Ramos-Horta. Congratulations. You deserve it. And you have endured a long struggle and even your ascension to ASEAN, you made that reference which is penetrating to the heart. You said that it is easier to go to heaven than to be accepted by ASEAN. You must have diplomatic skills. There is a very undiplomatic statement to make. Luckily, you have Malaysia as Chairman. We pushed hard and thank God you have succeeded.
3. Now let me share with you why I took it as both the Malaysian position and also personal battle. Now, President José Ramos-Horta was right in saying that to do justice to Malaysia. Earlier, Prime Minister had been consistent. Tun Mahathir was one of the earliest that gave recognition to the dependents and send a team from the

armed forces, peacekeeping. And I mentioned this even to during my speech to the parliament in Delhi. But the next stage of course essential to ASEAN.

4. Well, it is mind boggling. Why is it so difficult? Timor- Leste has always been part of ASEAN when they were part of Indonesia. So, to me it's just a matter of process. And they happen to be to have experienced such trials, such tribulations, such tragedy. I mean, compared to the population of Timor-Leste, it's heartbreaking to know that so many lives were lost in the process. From the days of Portuguese colonization. And you go to Timor-Leste, you see new buildings, offices, schools, hardly anything.
5. Pakistan, of course, it is a poor country. Forgive me saying that, President José Ramos-Horta, to share this with the Malaysians. It is. But do we engage with countries because the economic strength? No, we engage countries among neighbors or the region, for their ideals, their vision, their principles, their policies. Just because you happen to be poor at this stage. We were poor when we retained independence. Cambodia and Laos were relatively very poor when they were accepted into ASEAN. Although still took some years. But I must say that the experience the Timor-Leste is really unfortunate.
6. And therefore, when I assumed the Chairmanship ASEAN, I told the team, the Foreign Ministry and the Cabinet, I said, look, our aim is to make sure before we surrender your office to the next Chairman, Timor-Leste must be a member, full member of ASEAN.

7. And the process was tedious. The process was tedious because to become member there are certain parameters that must be met. Legislation, political corridor, economic corridor, too many corridors to reach. Well, they have a problem. So, I said to my colleagues, then help them contribute. We did. We gave funds through the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta. We sent staff, many, I did to bring them to Kuala Lumpur or Putrajaya and to send our people to Dili. I mean, that's what a comradeship is all about. That's what humanity is all about. That we were talking about. Aspirations, ideals, justice, you know. I mean, a country that been completely devastated, hardly any economic growth need to be assisted.

8. But I am like President José Ramos-Horta. I have great expectations. You know why? Because there's a moral clarity in the leadership. What the world lacks now is a voice of conscience, moral clarity. And this country, this man President José Ramos-Horta has that which the world lacks.

9. And in Timor-Leste Parliament, I emphasize that point. I said, you know, this relatively poor country, but he had the tenacity, courage and conviction way around the world. And I happened to be in prison. He was engaging with Azizah and Nurul Izzah and our friends and said that he has a role. So, interesting enough, when I met Kofi Annan after I was released, he said, how close are you with President José Ramos-Horta? You see, I know him, not too close. I said, why? But he kept on calling me, harassing me, insisting that do something to secure Anwar's release. You know, it's an issue of conscience. That's what we lack moral clarity, moral voice, voice of reason.

10. So, I say this to President José Ramos-Horta and Prime Minister Rala Xanana Gusmão that you please remain consistent and continue that mission. Build a country, focus on economic fundamentals, strengthen education, training. And when our investors go, I always mention, yes, of course, you need, you invest because you need profit. Fair. I don't question that. Never lose sight of the fact that there are responsibilities that come with that. We are not ex-colonial masters that come and exploit our countries and the resources. We go good commercial deal, profit, but there must be transfer technology training of the young and giving back through all possible schemes to the people.
11. There was an instruction to PETRONAS, even before PETRONAS could expand their activities, provide scholarship for students from Timor-Leste to study at Petronas University. And here Vincent, Jeffrey Cheah and all these big tycoons here. It has enormous potential.
12. Once they are now as a full member of ASEAN, there will be series of conferences and attendance. And I have told a number of my colleagues with ASEAN, I express, "what you have not been to Timor-Leste?" Although I've just been there two months back (joking tone). So, I was surprised to see that you must have in your agenda. I told Bongbong Marcos, you assume the leadership. You must be seen to be in Timor-Leste because you have to cover all ASEAN countries, the eleven.

13. I mentioned to some other friends. Of course I wouldn't mention here. The delegation with business delegation with business proposal. And I mentioned to the President and the Prime Minister, make sure that you have clarity in the policies. Make sure you have proper incentives. Make sure that you execute speedily and avoid this rotten tradition of corruption by political leaders or by the public service. That's what we mean by moral voice.
14. Get them to invest, make sure it's clear and understand that nobody would want to invest without an assurance of profit. Be effective, execute speedily, have efficient civil service. And I told Tan Sri Jeffrey Cheah, go to Timor-Leste and invest there. And you will put some pointers points. Similarly, Tan Sri Vincent Tan, don't talk about or don't think about projects and contracts here. I will not approve any projects if you do not show that you invest in Malaysia and invest in Timor-Leste. For both, thank you.
15. President José Ramos-Horta, you see, I'm quite excited. I'm talking from a friend. I want you to succeed because I want friends who have that moral clarity, moral voice. And you have an advantage as you are ASEAN and you have also this Portuguese speaking thing, that's why President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva was excited with Timor-Leste.
16. And people criticize just because they see this blanket view. Malaysia today is not because of me. Because my team, thousands and thousands of volunteers and staff have dedicated their life worked very hard to ensure that the entire conference series of conferences are successful. Give credit to them. The whole world is looking, the

whole world looks at Malaysia in a positive light. Yet you have this some, you know.

17. We can't stop some ridiculous voices selling to America. Why must you invite Trump? I invited Trump and I used the equation to be in the beast. We were all in the beast. I don't know what it means. For 35 or 40 minutes there was slow right from KLIA to the hotel, I make full use talk about tariffs. He asked about South China Sea and continue to urge him continue that just amicable resolution through a comprehensive deal, comprehensive solution on the issue of Gaza and Palestine, including the West Bank. I mean, we do that.
18. I do that in confidence. I repeated that during the ASEAN-US Meeting and the Bilateral Meeting Malaysia- United States. That's the best we can do. But of course, we have to do with wisdom, with diplomacy, that you must regain his trust prepared to listen. And to me, I said, I've done, I've tried my best. I've tried my best to represent the country, this country, to protect the interests of our people, to attract investment for Malaysia. And I've done my best to champion the cause of Gaza.
19. May Allah help us. Thank you very much.

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