

**OFFICIATING ADDRESS BY YAB PRIME MINISTER: THE 46TH
ASEAN INTER-PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY (AIPA) GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**

By : DATO' SERI ANWAR IBRAHIM

Venue : WORLD TRADE CENTRE, KUALA LUMPUR

Date : 18/09/2025

OFFICIATING ADDRESS

BY

THE HONOURABLE DATO' SERI ANWAR IBRAHIM

PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA

ON THE OCCASION OF

THE 46th ASEAN INTER-PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY (AIPA)

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

18th SEPTEMBER 2025 (THURSDAY) | 11:30AM

WORLD TRADE CENTRE, KUALA LUMPUR

Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh dan salam sejahtera

His Excellency Tan Sri Dato' Johari bin Abdul,

President of AIPA and Speaker of the House of Representatives of
Malaysia;

His Excellency Dato Awang Beme bin Awang Ali Basah,

Speaker of the Senate of Malaysia;

Your Excellencies Speakers and Honourable Members of

Parliament;

Dan yang saya muliakan, speaker dari Dewan Undangan Negeri yang turut menyerikan majlis pada hari ini.

1. Tentunya acara kita memberi makna kepada sistem demokrasi yang berfungsi menjamin supaya perundingan, perbincangan, teguran, dan kritikan diteruskan dalam suasana yang lebih sopan, memang sukar. Speaker-speaker ada di sini. Kadang-kadang bila suhu terus hangat, tugas speaker itu besar. Dan dalam sistem Parlimen, kita tahu dalam Dewan, tugas speaker itu hampir mutlak. Jadi, termasuk arahan pakaian. Jadi pada hari ini saya diarah pakai agak formal. Tetapi oleh kerana ini di luar Parlimen, saya tukar sikit, dengan izin. Sebab ada acara lain tadi pagi, kena pakai batik, selepas ini batik. Jadi, saya mohon, jangan dera saya di Parlimen nanti.
2. Saudara-saudara, yang kita faham, 46th General Assembly of The Asean Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) ini diasaskan dengan semangat ASEAN, memenuhi keperluan semasa dan menjadikan erti demokrasi itu dalam maksud memberi ruang, mengimbangi pandangan pemerintah dan juga pandangan pembangkang atau pandangan-pandangan lain, dan kebijaksanaan speaker akan menentukan apakah perjalanan itu cukup memuaskan.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

3. It is of course a profound honor for us to host this assembly. And as I have said, to give meaning to what we consider democratic accountability is to allow reason discourse in our House of

Representatives or parliaments. And that means to have a very functioning, critical, competent speakers at the national or local assemblies. Because by democratic accountability means, we allow for a healthy exchange and discourse that forums, committees, and of course the assembly in Parliament would focus on national development and people's welfare.

4. Malaysia has embarked on some of this reform agenda, and I am proud to say, with the support of the speaker on both speakers of the House of Parliament and Senate, we have introduced a very radical shift, what we call the Parliamentary Services Act, an outstanding achievement, because the institution of Parliament has become totally independent of governmental management.
5. And of course, I commend the speaker for harassing me to ensure that the Cabinet takes this as a priority, and finally tabling it for approval in Parliament. And on the issue of Parliamentary Services Act, we have found that any Malaysians, both the ruling parties and the opposition, gave their full support.
6. Now, following that, we had also established Special Select Committees. And Special Select Committees, by nature, has to be represented both by government and opposition. And I must say, it was easier in my role for many, many years as opposition leader, easier to perform in Parliament than to perform as Prime Minister. Because you are held accountable, you have to undertake to answer some very difficult questions, and some of the exchanges on very contentious issues, and raised in very cantankerous exchanges, which

I think is not necessarily very healthy. But that is something that is beyond us.

7. Our hope is, of course, to allow for members of Parliament to show and set this good example of Senate, or Congress for that matter, that we can engage, enter, and reason, discourse with some decorum. And this is, of course, a challenge in most Parliaments in Congress. How do you then present a case or choose to criticize, but maintain certain order, decorum?
8. Most parliaments, including Malaysia, is, of course, open to the media, particularly now the social media. Of course, members would choose to present their case, but we also want to alert the citizens at large, particularly the young, students and youth, to monitor both views so that they can then assess the views and then come up to a decision.
9. And I think, therefore, the role of speaker is beyond rules, but also the spirit of democratic engagement is to ensure that it is healthy, it promotes a healthy reason discourse, that this discourse would maintain, ensure that certain decorum is observed. And of course, that's your challenge. It's not necessarily mine. I have enough problems in the House, particularly when we introduce, in the last few years, Prime Minister's Question Time (PMQT). I wasn't sure whether I made the right decision, but I am stuck with that on a weekly basis.

10. But, I think notwithstanding our personal reflections and views on this, I must say that it is healthy discourse. It puts the Prime Minister and the government on guard. That gives the real meaning, in essence to what we call democratic accountability.
11. Democracy is not about elections every four or five years. Democracy is about a system that would allow the ruling party to be questioned and criticized and assessed by the public and to be responsible what they undertake to do. But similarly, are also parliamentarians.
12. As you know, development in many of our countries, in ASEAN and beyond, not only the government but parliamentarians are now being questioned. Whether they use their influence and power to strengthen their position or enhance their position, or for the better benefit from their privilege, or they actually serve the interests of their citizens.
13. And I think certainly the development the last few weeks has been quite a shock and put both the government and the opposition, members of Parliament, Congressmen, Senators, on guard that whatever you do, you must make sure that you honour the spirit of the Constitution, honour your Oath of Office and the spirit of accountability and the right for the citizens to question.
14. Of course, in the realm of control and influence by social media, there are times that people can be misled. Notwithstanding, it is our duty to perform the best of our ability to honour our commitment and our Oath of Office. And I must therefore thank the Speakers for ensuring

that we stay on guard. I mean, whatever I may have, the power lent to me as Prime Minister, when I am in the House of course, I'm subjected fully to the decision of the Speaker. And I must tell you, although the speaker is my friend, there are many of his decisions that I personally do not like or agree. But that is what the system is. We have to be most respectful and because otherwise the system would fail.

15. Coming back to the central issues of governance, what is ultimately the role of Parliament or Assemblies? It is to ensure that we hear and we truly and honourably represent the true aspirations of our people. And by nature, power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely, which means that you must always be cautioned and hold those in power more accountable than the rest. And we have seen the governments fail because there is a tendency for those in power to amass wealth and to accept a systemic corruption as a way of life. And I think I must commend that in ASEAN we forge ahead in our deliberations.

16. I must thank my colleagues, Sultan of Brunei, Presidents and Prime Ministers for allowing this forum to be really open exchanges in a very frank, friendly manner. And we deliberate on issues not considering what is highly sensitive to one another, and we talk inclusivity, yes. Inclusivity means that we do not represent the only elites. We represent the nation, which means the most marginalized, whether it's urban, poor or those in the rural heartland. Whether the interests of the majority or the minority, and particularly the women and the youth.

17. ASEAN has given enough, I think, a good forum for women, for representatives of the youth to express their views and I think not many countries would do so. In every ASEAN leadership function will have to sit down, listen to the deliberation of the youth. And the leaders have got just to eventually shut up and listen to the expressions of our young. Fortunately, our young are more moderate as compared to when I was young. So, they do express. But although they do it politely, the issues raised are concerning. Issue of governance, issue of excesses and corruption, issue of projects and programs and economic development that should not marginalize minorities or groups of people in the rural heartland.
18. And more significantly, issues that in these turbulent times, that must consider the role of the youth even in utilizing new technology or what it means by digital transformation for the youth, what it means for talent to acquire knowledge in new technology, including the AI. I think these and their concerns on job, on security and the social fabric of our children. And I therefore must say with aggregation, it's not just what Malaysia is doing this year, but what our colleagues have been doing in the past many years.
19. And I believe we'll continue to do so in the next many years. It is because of this spirit and we hear some skirmishes between Thailand and Cambodia. We just take it as a group where people of course, do acknowledge my role as chairman. But I must say there's an urge of all our leaders in ASEAN. Before I could invite both Prime Ministers to come to Kuala Lumpur to finally seal an agreement on understanding, I confer with all our leaders in ASEAN. And after the initial meeting, I again contacted all of them, which means ASEAN

among political leaders have been working together based on trust, and I believe the same spirit will continue when we pass on the baton to other leaders.

20. What is outstanding about parliaments and AIPA, to my mind, is to ensure that this does not only be confined necessarily to leaders of governments, but representatives. And thank you again Tan Sri Dato' Johari for taking this initiative and moving it forward, making sure that AIPA becomes more functioning, more active beyond the normal annual meetings and exchanges by getting programs going.
21. When I was at the ASEAN Secretariat, I think the sentiment expressed by many of our ASEAN professionals is that not only the ASEAN leaders forum should be functional, but all, which mean among the youth, among the women, among the various sects, security, among the, you know, economic, social, cultural, must be functional because the challenges are enormous and would be unsurmountable unless we take some real courageous measures.
22. From the beginning ASEAN is unique. Why? Because we were formed initially by the vision of our leaders then, at a time when Southeast Asia was turbulent, it became the focus of the superpowers. The super wanted us to be dragged into certain groupings and the vision, the visionary role of our leaders then was just look, we have to be they used the term then "freedom and neutrality." Now we use "centrality." But essentially, we mean we should engage with the West, with the East, with the North, with the South but we must maintain our

centrality, that we represent the conscience and aspirations of our people and ASEAN.

23. First and foremost, ASEAN must survive, must remain peaceful, and I should say Alhamdulillah, thanks to Allah Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala, the almighty, because despite some skirmishes here and there, we are still considered the most peaceful region in the world.

24. And beyond that, I would say it is the fastest growing economy in the world. It's getting traction, interest when countries are peaceful, there's clarity, policy, we help each other. Some excel in digital, some excel in energy, some excel in food technology. We share, mind you, it's difficult. In the first few decades we were successful in maintaining some peace and order, although we are not really there when it comes to Myanmar, but there has been some progress. We do engage on our terms, I've conveyed to both factions in Myanmar that we engage on our terms. We are not dictated by the others. We say that you have to be part and parcel of the ASEAN community. You must be inclusive, you must stop these atrocities against any community, and you must allow for humanitarian aid without discrimination.

25. And I must say, at least on those issues. Stop the bombings and atrocities against any ethnic minority and number two, make sure there's access, humanitarian access. Where Malaysia set up the military hospital, Thailand, Singapore, Philippines, Indonesia, Brunei all came with, of course, Vietnam and the rest, come with good assistance. Our condition is there must be full humanitarian access

without discrimination. For the first time in a decade, both these principles were agreed by both. A long way to go, but at least there has been some remarkable success, to my mind, because of the consensus in ASEAN.

26. Our priority therefore is, of course, economic development, new investments. We have huge investments from the United States and Europe; we have increased investments from China and India and the rest. And it's not as easy to navigate, but we can manage because we are acting together.
27. Can you imagine we have our summit in October and it's very challenging to ASEAN leaders. We'll have President Donald Trump of United States here. We will have Premier Li Qiang. I'm not too sure Vladimir Putin has not confirmed, but he mentioned to me there's a likelihood he's coming. Don't envy me, it is a major task to navigate at those times and then we have Modi of India, Prime Minister of Korea, Japan and Canada, Italy, EU, Brazil, President Lula, and Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa.
28. So, we're not talking about just 10 plus Timor Leste, eleven countries. We are talking about countries that are getting enough attention and interest from countries in Asia, in Europe, in Africa, in Latin America. So, the rest is up to AIPA to make sure that you benefit from these exchanges and I'm sure once this is somewhat formalized, the relationship, I'm sure the parliamentarians, as we have exchanges with the EU now, with AIPA, would continue.

29. So, it is a very challenging expanded role but we must be very clear what we want. We must not compromise on the issue of good governance. We must not compromise on the issue of ridding our societies and countries of endemic corruption and abuse of power and we must make sure that we remain focused, that sustainability means economic growth but care for the welfare of our people.

Terima kasih.

Walaikumussalam warahmatullahi wabarakatuh.

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