



**SPEECH TEXT**

**YAB DATO' SERI ANWAR BIN IBRAHIM  
PERDANA MENTERI**

**FOR**

**14TH ASEAN LAW ASSOCIATION (ALA) GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY AND THE ASEAN LAW CONFERENCE 2023**

**19 OCTOBER 2023 (THURSDAY)**

**SHANGRI-LA, KUALA LUMPUR**

*Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh dan Salam Sejahtera.*

**Yang Amat Arif Tun Tengku Maimun,**

Ketua Hakim Negara;

**YB Dato' Sri Azalina binti Othman Said,**

Menteri di Jabatan Perdana Menteri (Undang-Undang dan Reformasi Institusi);

Timbalan Menteri, Yang Arif Ketua Hakim;

**The Honourable Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon,**

Chief Justice of Singapore;

*Sahabat dan juga penyelenggara majlis ini.*

*Bagi pihak Kerajaan, tentulah saya ingin merakamkan setinggi-tinggi penghargaan kepada rakan-rakan yang dapat menyelenggarakan acara ini yang sebenarnya dianggap penting dalam kematangan pertumbuhan sebelum negara yang bebas dan demokratik.*

*Saya meyakini seperti mana ditekankan oleh Yang Amat Arif Tengku Maimun. Bahawa kebebasan badan kehakiman yang merupakan tunggak penanda aras suatu negara yang matang. Bebas dan menghormati prinsip negara hukum.*

*Jadi oleh yang demikian, sidang ini akan bermakna jika ada lagi pandangan dan saranan untuk kita bersama-sama badan kehakiman dan Kerajaan mengambil langkah-langkah yang perlu untuk mengangkat martabat dan kekuatan badan ini.*

*Dalam Belanjawan MADANI baru-baru ini saya mengumumkan peruntukan. Untuk memperkukuh akademik kehakiman yang diminta oleh Ketua Hakim, untuk membantu meningkatkan keupayaan dan martabat kehakiman Negara kita.*

Ladies and gentlemen,

1. The theme for this year ALA General Assembly, an ASEAN Law Conference, “Asean Tapestry Our Pride” is a testament to the very essence of ALA existence. ALA serves as an engaging platform for legal luminaries to weave the principles of justice within the weft of the rule of law.
2. This results in an enduring tapestry of shared values, fortifying our communities and fostering a safer, more robust society. In this tapestry of diversity, members of the legal profession in ASEAN play the vital role of ensuring that the rule of law is observed and protected.
3. But then, what exactly is the rule of law? i'm having some courage speaking in front of chief judges about what's law. Now, standing before a jury of erudite and eminent persons steeped in the practice of law, as well as the dispensation of justice. Let me first attempt to satisfy the rudimentary requirements of a textbook answer. I have a lot of time to digest in the years in and out of prison.

4. First off the rule of law warrants that government power must be used in accordance within the law. That is, the broad concept. Flowing therefrom, is the principle that government and those who will power must be held to account for their decisions and actions.
5. Government must be transparent and that is imperative from the principle of open government. Hence, shady dealings and dodgy decisions cannot be used to pull wool over the people's eyes in the name of the official secrets act.
6. Then there is the doctrine that laws must be fair and just. And that all must have the accessibility to the hallowed halls of justice. Speaking of which, at the risk of sounding like a broken record, let me once again underscore the paramount importance of an independent, impartial and competent judiciary.
7. The very bulk work of justice itself, such a judiciary is a sine qua non of the rule of law.
8. There was a time, our nation's history, where certain black sheep of the judiciary, working hand in glove with certain powers that be, committed gross transgressions against its very institution, bringing infamy and disrepute on the one

hand, and feeding the virulent spread of tyranny and arbitrariness on the other.

9. Trust me, this was certainly no enlightened despotism. Today and of late, we hear disconcerting rumblings. Not necessarily reflective of the majority, that the executive arm of the organs of state is committing the same shenanigans, interfering with due process and strong arming the judiciary as well.
10. There is not one iota of two truth in these careless allegations, which are now being repeated mention in the social media.
11. Let me reiterate what i have said before. As Prime Minister, not only have i not encroached upon even a single inch of the sacred terrain of the judiciary, but i shall defend at all costs the independence of the judiciary.

Ladies and gentlemen,

12. Women make up over half of the population of ASEAN and while we have made some headway in achieving gender equality. We have, in the words of poet laureate Robert Frost, still miles and miles to go before we sleep.

13. In other words, there are still significant challenges to overcome. Women bear a disproportionate share of household responsibilities, while at the same time, i accorded only limited control over family access and unequal access to vital resources, markets and financial opportunities.
14. This can't go on. We must champion policies that promote and uphold gender equality across multiple spheres. Including education, employment and leadership.
15. We must give voice and weight to their contributions, recognizing their potential and providing them with equal opportunities to lead and innovate.
16. As for children, in addition to being victims of forced labor and trafficking, many are still involved in dangerous work that harms their health, safety and moral development.
17. Hence, it is our duty to create safe spaces where their minds can flourish and arise, can be protected. I therefore commend the initiatives pursuant to the ASEAN roadmap on elimination of worst forms of child labor by 2025.

18. Additionally, while the implementation of the optional protocols ban on child phonography differs between jurisdictions, the commitment to fighting it is evident through domestic laws that prohibit this atrocious crime.
19. The role of parents in protecting their children cannot be overstressed. There is a saying that the voice of parents is the voice of gods. For their children, they are heavens lieutenants. This clearly demonstrates the enormous power and influence that parents have over their children, especially so in the traditional Asian and of course, ASEAN societies.
20. In this regard, the law should progress in tandem with its moral duty to ensure that parents honour and fulfil the trust incumbent on them for the well being of their children.

Distinguished guests,

21. As for the legal profession, i have been chastised for making backhanded jokes about lawyers, particularly during my early years in government. My jokes, older and wiser now i shall refrain from doing so.



22. And instead turned to no better legal icon than Lord Denning himself, who, in the following words encapsulated a lawyer's duty to their client and the court. He has a duty to the court which is paramount.
23. It is a mistake to suppose that he is the mouthpiece of his client, to say what he wants or his tool to do what he directs. He is none of those things. He owes allegiance to a higher cause. It is the cause of truth and justice. I salute you all.
24. In the contemporary world, where access to justice is unfortunately more a privilege than a right for some, I call on lawyers to be the champions of justice, the fierce advocates for the marginalized and the torch bearers of equality.
25. We must strive to ensure that justice is not a commodity only available to those with financial means, but rather a universal right, accessible to all of their socio-economic status.
26. Now, over the past five years, this country has more than its fair share of politics in and of itself. Political contestation is not necessarily a bad thing. I, for one, would not urge the people to remain passive in the face of attempts to subvert the people's choice.

27. But as i travel the country to meet the people, industry, the soul of a nation's earth, one thing comes across loud and clear. They are fed up with politics. They are wary of the bickering and grandstanding, the constant spin and positioning. What they long for is honest efforts and real results.
28. What they crave is real roll up your sleeves, leadership, not political theatre. What they need is progress over pettiness. I know there are good people on both sides, principled people with different views, yet patriots who love this country.
29. We may differ in perspective, but we share a vision of service to something greater than ourselves. There will be disagreements between us. Vigorous debate is the heartbeat of democracy.
30. But there also comes a point where disagreements descend into disruption. This is something that we all must strive to avert. Now, if the world's leading investors are placing massive resources into this country, we must be doing something right.

31. The fact of the matter is that there are many reasons to be supremely confident about the future of Malaysia. We are now poised to reap the benefits of a global rebalancing of centers where critical technologies are produced.
32. Whether it is semiconductors, aeroplane parts or medical services. Malaysia is on the short list for companies they are looking for the right balance of talent, infrastructure and cost while insulating themselves from geopolitical risk.
33. I heard this personally from many of the ceo's of fortune 500 companies i met in New York last month. But efforts to attract these companies will come to doubt if we continue this relentless campaign to destabilize and undermine the government at every step.

Ladies and gentlemen,

34. While we are here deliberating on the legal aspects and the political situation of our nation, my mind and heartstrings are constantly being pulled towards events some 8000 km away.

35. What we are witnessing Gaza is hard for all of us to process, even for those accustomed to seeing the aftermath of hate, terror and violence. That difficulty lies not only in knowing of the immense tragedies that have occurred, but also in our dread of the catastrophe that awaits.
36. What does this have to do with the law? everything and nothing. It has everything to do with the law because that is what we all ought to be standing for at this moment of great danger and that should be especially so for those countries of the world that are always quick to claim that they support a rules based international order.
37. But it also has nothing to do with the law, because these very same countries are quick to suspend such talk when it comes to Israel, the brutal accomplishments of the Palestinians and its flagrant disregard for the rules based international order.
38. Malaysia believes in upholding international law. In fact, our security and prosperity is predicated on the primacy of the rules that govern the interactions between states. But it is hard to believe in its sanctity, when some nations have such a tenacious commitment to the iron fists of the occupation

forces, brutal in their instincts, genocidal in their purpose, nefarious in their ends.

39. That is why Malaysia will spend no diplomatic effort in working with our partners to prevent the further massacre of civilians in Gaza. There should be no doubt, no question of our commitment in this regard.

40. In closing, let us embrace the spirit of collaboration. Knowing that we pool our resources, ideas and talents, we create a force capable of overcoming any hurdle. The time for action is now. Together, we can shape a legacy that will be celebrated for generations to come.

Terima kasih.