

VERBATIM TEXT

REMARKS BY

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PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA

AT A JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE WITH

THE HONOURABLE ANTHONY ALBANESE

PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA

KUALA LUMPUR

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Selamat tengahari Perdana Menteri Anthony Albanese.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

We are really encountering post-normal times, we did discuss it, developments on unanticipated, and continue to haunt us because we're not able to fairly and squarely craft an agenda

forward, because many of these issues are quite unresolved you know, disruptions both in terms of production and supply chains.

So, the world certainly looks different today, Prime Minister than it did when you were here in Kuala Lumpur last October. The Strait of Hormuz have been effectively closed for nearly seven weeks. Global energy markets are under severe stress, supply chains are disrupted, and the consequences are plummeting and pummeling through the seven seas.

This is of course the backdrop of our meeting today. I'm of course extremely grateful that the exchange has been very frank, cordial, as great friends, not only in terms of bilateral relationship, but based on trust. And that was what I said and I want to repeat this publicly, Malaysia will always be a reliable partner to Australia, we will be mates (I don't know why you use that term), through thick and thin as we have always been. Our discussions today cover trade, investments and agriculture, but given the state of the world today, I want to start with energy.

Malaysia and Australia share strong interdependence in energy resources, including fuel and LNG. We have existing agreements and today we reaffirmed our commitment to them. We also signed a joint statement on energy security, reflecting our commitment to stable and resilient energy supplies.

We also witnessed the signing of the MOU between Malaysia's Department of Islamic Development, or JAKIM, and Australia's Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. This will enhance market access for both countries.

We also agreed to deepen cooperation in agriculture, including sharing expertise in production and irrigation to ensure sustainable food supply for both Malaysians and Australians.

Let no one mistake the weight of what we signed today when supply chains are disrupted and food prices are increasing and rising. Agreements like these have a direct impact on

people's lives. The distance between a signed agreement and a family's dinner table is shorter than most people imagine.

I also wish to touch on Palestine. There is a ceasefire in Gaza, but let us be honest about what that has meant so far. The killings have not stopped; the hunger has not ceased in the West Bank Settlements continue to expand and violence continues to escalate with utter impunity. The world must not avert its gaze and allow a ceasefire to become the silence of the grave. What the Palestinian people need is a just and lasting solution, and that means a viable sovereign state.

Malaysia will not waver on this matter of principle and conscience. I appreciate Australia's stance on Gaza, calling for an end to hostilities, supporting humanitarian assistance, and working towards a lasting resolution. That position matters, and Malaysia welcomes that.

Prime Minister Albanese, thank you again for making this journey to Kuala Lumpur. These conversations matter, and I'm glad we are having them. I look forward to continuing the

work when we meet in Australia next year, or, I'm sure, before that. But the Australian meeting will be the Fourth Annual Leaders Meeting. Until then, let us make good on what we have promised today. Thank you.

Q&A SESSION

MEDIA MALAYSIA:

Assalamualaikum. Good afternoon Mr. President., Dato' Seri. With nearly 40% of Malaysia's crude oil imports exposed to potential disruption via the Straits of Hormuz, what immediate and concrete steps will Malaysia and Australia take following this visit to safeguard stable energy flows? And are there any contingency plans discussed?

PM MALAYSIA:

We did discuss. Of course, Australia is also a producer of some products, and we do. So, this exchange is useful. These are of course trying difficult times, but as friends and bilaterally in excellent sort of relations, we give priority. So, we look at the details. I mean, we also met Petronas chiefs, and they will continue to have detailed discussions. And I think, what we need to do is of course to see first our domestic requirements and also Australia's domestic energy requirements and see where we can assist each other in a quid pro quo basis. There are issues, areas which we need from Australia and also items

that they need from us. So, I think it will be certainly beneficial to both countries.

PM AUSTRALIA:

The relationship is one which is a benefit to both countries. We're a major exporter of LNG to here in Malaysia and of course we receive a range of products, both fuel and fertilizers from here in Malaysia.

One of the discussions that we had was as well around the prospect of further enhancement of those relationships. And we've tasked with Petronas and with my department here. Further work to be done about how we can deal with what are very challenging times for both of our nations as there is right around the globe. But Australia is very confident that we of course will fulfill the contracts that we have here with Malaysia because we regard that security as being so important for our relationships in the region.

MEDIA AUSTRALIA:

Hi, Prime Ministers. Zach Da Silva from the Australian Associated Press.

Prime Minister Albanese, we've seen pictures today of a massive refinery fire in Geelong. There are fears this could lead to more pronounced fuel shortages in some parts of Australia. In your travels through Singapore, Brunei and now Malaysia, can you point to any additional shipments of fuel you've secured to help deal with some of those shortages? And will you pour more money into shoring up Australia's fuel reserves in the next in next month's budget?

And Prime Minister Ibrahim, if I can. Your petroleum industries source a lot of their crude oil from the Middle East. If that's further restricted in the coming months, what guarantees can you give to countries like Australia that rely on Malaysian refined fuels that those shipments won't dry out?

PM AUSTRALIA:

Firstly, on the fire at the VIVA refinery in Geelong. They are very distressing scenes. On a positive note, it is good that there was no workers harmed and no human impact of this fire which has occurred overnight. I can report that the fire I'm advised has been now putting out, and I certainly thank Fire Rescue Victoria and the Country Fire Authority for the work that they have done.

As for the damage, obviously there will need to be an assessment of that and the consequences for fuel supply. Clearly, there will be consequences for it, but there'll be a proper assessment taking place over the coming short period as well. We think that we'll continue to work with the company to do what we can to make sure that anything that is offline is brought online as soon as possible.

With regard to fuel as well, I can announce that my government has secured an additional 100 million litres of diesel from two shipments, one from Brunei, where I was yesterday, and one from South Korea. This is the first of many expected shipments secured under the government's new

strategic reserve powers with the support of Export Finance Australia. That is very important. The purchase of more than 570,000 barrels of additional diesel has been done by Veva, made possible because of the decision that my government made early in this global crisis to empower Export Finance Australia to do that. Additional fuel can be directed to where it is needed most, including to our farmers. And one of the discussions we had today was very much about diesel. That's so important at a time where many farmers are looking at planting and they will only do that with the confidence that they'll be able to harvest as well.

So, this is welcome news. It's a practical outcome of the engagement and the interventions that my government has had to deal with the consequences of a crisis response right across the other side of the world, but one that is impacting here in our region and in Australia in particular.

PM MALAYSIA:

Malaysia requires minerals, particularly phosphates, rock phosphates from Australia. And we have the capacity in exchange. For example, I'm not using the term exchange, but

then in terms of this commercial deal to export urea to Australia. Just set an example where friends can engage effectively and see what we can offer and what they can offer in place.

And similarly, in terms of, I did express our concern on the issue of diesel because our supply is inadequate in the medium term. But in terms of fuel, we had obtainment assurance from Petronas that once the most domestic requirements are met, there is clearly some excess. And we given an assurance that the priority will be to Australia, because this can be really, I mean, in exchange among the political parties here, a very contentious issue to suggest that we are giving priority to other countries. Not necessarily so.

The priority, of course, domestic requirements, economic resilience, in the country. But here is where such negotiations, meetings between among friends is very critical. And you have seen that there are certain items and minerals that we require. I mean, we import gas, LNG from Australia. And they have assured of us of this supply and to honour the commitments and the agreement. So, we have to also then to

ensure that their requirements beyond what we can make available will be equally honored. That's what friendship is all about.

And I think we have achieved that sort of understanding. And I'm glad to say that Prime Minister Albanese will have with his team a detailed discussions with Petronas. Thank you.

MEDIA MALAYSIA:

Good afternoon, Prime Minister, Hasmi from Astro Awani.

In view of the conflict in the Middle East, Pope Leo has called for peace in the world. What is Malaysia and Australia respond to Pope Leo's comment? Thank you.

PM MALAYSIA:

Well, Albanese is a Catholic, I'm a Muslim, but we share something in common. We have very high regard and respect for Pope Leo of the Vatican, he expressed the voice of conscience. We followed his statements, and we share his

expression, his desire for peace, for justice, that atrocities must end.

And I think any reasonable, sane person, and I as a Muslim and Malaysian generally, certainly support the position taken by the Pope, and I think we would certainly suggest that people say in people across the world, should support the call for peace against any form of injustice, atrocities, whether he made reference specifically to Gaza or the position in the Middle East or for that matter after the aftermath of the Israeli-American attack on Tehran and Iran. But that notwithstanding that, what I think is clearly supported and endorsed by us is his call for peace, for justice, and for order.

I can't see any way one can question, dispute or consider that as an unreasonable or unfriendly statement, but this is a call that must be supported by all. I'm glad to say too, that the present Pope has done whatever is necessary to engage with leaders of other religions.

I also understand that he has been one of the most active in terms of engaging with Muslim scholars at Al-Azhar. I have been really informed that people are extremely happy with this new attitude towards friendship and engagement.

PM AUSTRALIA:

I was honoured to have an audience with the Holy Father, Pope Leo, after his Inaugural Mass just a year ago. I found him a very thoughtful, dignified, and extraordinary person who will provide leadership not just to the Catholic Church, but will be a very significant figure in global affairs, as was his predecessor, Pope Francis.

I think that the three great monotheistic faiths have so much in common that it is indeed a tragedy when we see war and conflict over having an impact on innocent people. It's not surprising that the Holy Father would speak in favour of peace and justice. And I think overwhelmingly that is what citizens of countries and in Australia we have. We celebrate and respect people of all faiths and of none. I think overwhelmingly people want to see peace and we are seeing the consequences of conflict, a conflict on the other side of the world.

I think that most people, with respect, I'll speak about my citizens. Most people, if you ask them to find the Strait of Hormuz on a map last December, I would be surprised if there was a large number could point to it directly. Everyone knows it now. There are consequences of conflict for a loss of innocent life. But there are also consequences for everybody in the world at the moment due to what is extraordinary negative economic consequences of the conflict, which is why we will continue to argue for a de-escalation and for a resolution through dialogue rather than through military action.

MEDIA AUSTRALIA:

Prime Ministers, Andrew Greene from the West Australian and The Nightly.

What is the policy of both of your nations when it comes to buying oil from countries which are subject to international sanctions, such as Russia and Iran? And would you be prepared either country to pay a toll or levy to the regime in Iran? And with increasing expectations that Australia could soon impose a gas tax in next month's budget? Is this speculation hurting chances of securing energy supplies?

PM AUSTRALIA:

Well, the only speculation is from journalists who believe they know what's in a budget that hasn't been written yet. So, our budget will be in May, and we will hand it down. But one of the things about Australia is when we do a deal with a country and whether it's in writing or a shake of hands or a conversation, we stick. That is what makes one of the things that makes Australia who we are. And, so I think that is well understood by our trading partners, which is why we are respected and why we are so trusted going forward.

With regard to freedom of navigation our position is very clear about UNCLOS and has been for some time it applies right around the world, and I think there was a third bit, Andrew. Well, on the freedom of navigation is what is provided for. We expect freedom of navigation is the basis of international trade and that is very important, that principle and it's one that we hold to.

PM MALAYSIA:

We as a country have been engaging with more countries as I mention with Prime Minister Albanese that the largest trade investments is still from United States notwithstanding, we have good bilateral relations with Russia. We trade with them. And now I think there is absolute necessity we'll have to manage because my priority, the mandate that I have, is to protect the interests of the people in this country.

Similarly with Iran, we have maintained good bilateral relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran and due to that sort of arrangement many of my colleagues in the Gulf and in the Arab world have sought our views and our assistance to convey their concerns and their views to the Iranian leadership.

And I think we use that to promote peace and resolution, amicable resolution to the conflict. And on the position, whether the Strait of Malacca or Strait of Hormuz we remain consistent in their freedom of navigation, but there are, of course, issues that must be resolved. You cannot ignore the fact that when a country has been attacked and no assurance

of guarantee of security, there are concerns that you must also address. And that's why I think, whilst supporting the position of freedom of navigation. We also want category guarantee from countries, big powers included, and so to end that animosity and attack and even sanctions against other countries.

So, we look at it a more comprehensive manner, but ultimately we are for peace and the Strait Hormuz must finally be open to avail to the international community so that we will help resolve major issue confronting, not only the region, but also the world.

Thank you.