

**SPEECH BY**  
**YAB TAN SRI DATO' HAJI MUHYIDDIN BIN HAJI MOHD YASSIN**  
**PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA**

**“WOMEN, THE KEY TO A BRIGHTER FUTURE”**  
**RISE 2021: FUTURE FEMALE LEADERS FORUM**

**ORGANISED BY**  
**PROJECT GIRLS FOR GIRLS AND MYPRODIGY GLOBAL**  
**ON 13TH MARCH 2021 (SATURDAY)**

---

*Bismillahirrahmanirrahim*

*Assalamuálaikum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh dan salam sejahtera.*

YB Datuk Seri Rina Harun

Minister of Women, Family and Community Development

YB Dato' Seri Nancy Shukri

Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture

YAB Datuk Hj Hasni Mohamad

Menteri Besar of Johor

His Excellency Sandiaga Uno

Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy

Indonesia

YB Senator Alkaf Jaziri  
Founder  
MyProdigy Global

Ms Izana Salleh  
President  
Project Girls for Girls International

Ladies and gentlemen,

1. It gives me a great pleasure to address all of you at the RISE Virtual Conference 2021 organised by Project Girls for Girls International and MyProdigy Global. I would like to congratulate the organising committee for your effort in bringing together inspiring leaders from around the world to discuss the issue of gender equality and women empowerment in this conference.

2. Women have contributed immensely to the economic and social well-being of our societies. Even during this COVID-19 pandemic, with 70% of global health workers are women, their contribution to the war on COVID-19 is remarkable. As our economies are gradually recovering from the impact of the pandemic, women too assume a very important role in providing emotional and financial support to the affected families.

3. Malaysia recognizes that empowered women, especially financially empowered women, are key to building nations and economies. As such, the

Malaysian government continues to provide support for women entrepreneurs through various initiatives.

4. These include the RM95 million special micro credit financing provided by the government through TEKUN, MARA and Agrobank, in addition to the RM50 million allocated to the Islamic Economic Development Foundation (YaPEIM), to support Islamic Pawnbroking through Ar-Rahnu BizNita.

5. Whilst this pandemic has revealed the vulnerabilities of our social and economic systems, we must also confront the underlying issue of gender inequality that may hinder the creation and long-term sustainability of a just and equitable development of our nation. We must stand together in making significant strides toward achieving gender equality, where women will not be discriminated against in the society and at workplace.

6. Women are the pillars of our nation and we must create and sustain the right environment for women - and all of us - to thrive. The support should start with young girls, especially in education. According to a new Brookings report, increasing the number of women completing secondary education by just 1% could increase a country's economic growth by 0.3%. Research by the Brookings Institution has also found that every additional year of school increases a girls' eventual wages by an average of 12%.

7. We must therefore continue to provide the necessary support for women to succeed and thrive in their life – be it in education, in business and in their profession. They must be given equal opportunities to compete and to excel in their respective fields.

8. I would also like to encourage current leaders in any organization – be it in the government, non-governmental organizations, political parties and the corporate sector - to identify, uplift and empower young women leaders. Give them the space they need to flourish and unleash their full potential. I believe our young women leaders of today, will be great leaders of tomorrow. We must stop doubting their potential because it is already proven that women too can make better leaders.

Ladies and gentlemen,

9. Empowering women goes beyond just giving them encouraging words. It is about acknowledging that there are cultural and systemic challenges that women face in their every-day life solely due to their gender. Empowering women means we must not be a bystander to this fact but be the ones who actively provide continuous support for women to overcome those challenges and create change for a just and equitable world. Empowering women means doing our part in protecting their rights to education, to freedom of speech and to equal opportunities that they rightfully deserve.

10. We must provide the opportunities and necessary support for them to succeed in all their endeavours. Let them pursue their wildest dreams and prove their ability to succeed in this very challenging and competitive world. I believe successful women will contribute immensely to the betterment of our country, our community, and our families.

11. I hope RISE 2021: Future Female Leaders Forum will allude to how important it is for us to empower our young girls and women to create a just, equitable and prosperous world. I must thank everyone whose efforts have made this conference a success. I am glad to know that many of you have tirelessly worked toward making the women empowerment agenda as one of your top priorities.

12. In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful, it is my pleasure to declare RISE 2021: Future Female Leaders Forum open.

*Wabillahi al-taufiq wal hidayah wassalamua'laikum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh.*