



KEYNOTE ADDRESS

**PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA
YAB DATO' SERI ANWAR IBRAHIM**

ASEAN LAW FORUM 2025

***ENHANCING ACCESS TO JUSTICE IN THE ASEAN
ECONOMIC COMMUNITY: BRIDGING LEGAL COOPERATION
FOR INCLUSIVE GROWTH IN THE DIGITAL AGE***

**21 AUGUST 2025 (THURSDAY) | 9:00 AM
KUALA LUMPUR CONVENTION CENTRE (KLCC),
MALAYSIA**

Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh dan salam sejahtera.

Menteri Azalina;

Rakan-rakan Menteri;

Peguan Negara;

Timbalan Menteri; serta

Tetamu-tetamu yang saya muliakan.

1. *Alhamdulillah, kita dapat menganjurkan satu persidangan perundangan ASEAN dan seperti mana yang disinggung oleh Menteri Azalina, sistem perundangan, badan kehakiman merupakan tonggak utama dalam negara bebas merdeka dan demokratik. Oleh itu, ia menuntut perubahan - reform yang berterusan.*

2. *Prinsip pengasingan kuasa menuntut kita memahami bahawa era keangkuhan kuasa sama ada badan eksekutif, badan kehakiman atau legislatif, haruslah berakhir. Pengalaman di negara-negara ASEAN, termasuk di Malaysia membuktikan bahawa ada era di mana keangkuhan kuasa politik menyebabkan lemahnya sistem perundangan, seperti juga kerosakan dan pencemaran dalam badan kehakiman, termasuk tundingan rasuah dan keangkuhan serta penyelewengan.*

3. *Sebab itu, apabila Menteri Azalina menekankan keperluan perubahan dan beliau melakukannya itu dengan semangat yang kental serta kesungguhan dalam sidang-sidang Jemaah Menteri, perubahan-perubahan yang paling mantap dalam sejarah kita lihat, dan langkah-langkah bersama Jabatan Peguam Negara itu akan memberi keyakinan baharu untuk meleburkan sanggahan terhadap salah guna kuasa, baik dari segi pimpinan eksekutif atau pun kecenderungan badan kehakiman untuk mempamirkan kecelaruan dalam pemahaman perundangan dan aspek keangkuhan yang berlaku.*
4. *Sebab itu, kita sebagai Kerajaan MADANI mendukung sepenuhnya ikhtiar yang dikemukakan oleh beliau dan rakan-rakan, khususnya di Jabatan Peguam Negara.*
5. Thank you again Dr. Kao Kim Hourn for the support, and I believe the presence of ministers, the Attorney General and representatives of ASEAN signify our total commitment to undertake efforts to ensure law, justice and accessibility in ASEAN.
6. So we are of course honored to host this forum and may again reiterate my expression of gratitude to all those who have contributed to the success and most significantly, the

ASEAN commitment seen from the Senior Representation during this conference.

7. Your presence, of course, reaffirms our collective resolve to strengthen justice and fairness as a cornerstone in regional integration. Malaysia has chosen the theme “Inclusivity and Sustainability”, and again as alluded to by YB Minister Dato’ Seri Azalina binti Othman, these words are not just mere platitudes. They represent a profound commitment to build an ASEAN that leaves no one behind and ensures our institutions endure beyond the demands of the present moment. Coming from my personal experience, I can certainly differentiate the meaning of accessibility to the elites and the rich and the masses.
8. Therefore, the issue of access is to me very critical to ensure there is justice for every single citizen in our countries. I've seen where the poor, the marginalized have been largely ignored because there's no access, no to the legal process. Therefore, the discussion must focus also to issues of inclusivity because both in terms of development and progress, education and health, accessibility to legal process is to my mind critical, particularly again I repeat, the poor, the marginalized because I have seen in Sungai Buloh, who I had the rare privilege of staying for many-many years. I can see that close disparity and therefore

justice cannot be expected to be affected, impacted on these poorer segments of a community.

9. That's why I take real pleasure, the passion and commitment of YB Minister Dato' Seri Azalina binti Othman although she didn't have the experience, personal practical experience, but I've shared with her quite a number of times what it means to have access to justice.
10. Sustainability, in turn, is about building legal systems and institutions that stand the test of time. A government's true strength does not rest in the reach of its authority, but in the integrity of its institutions, its fairness in governance and the trust it earns from its citizens.
11. So, we stand today at a defining moment. ASEAN is moving towards his Vision 2045 and the rule of law will be the foundation of that journey. A rules-based ASEAN is not a technical aspiration. It is a bedrock of trust, stability and shared prosperity.
12. Similarly, unity in ASEAN does not demand uniformity. Our diversity is our strength. Each of our nations carries its own traditions, cultural values, and historical experiences, yet these differences enrich rather than divide us. We are familiar with “Bersekutu Bertambah Mutu” in Malaysia,

“Bhinneka Tunggal Ika” in Indonesia, which actually summarizes this spirit of multiculturalism and yet having the same aspiration for united country and now ASEAN.

13. So, what binds us together is not sameness, but the collective will to ensure that our systems work in harmony for the greater good of our peoples. And if we are to uphold the shared framework, then each nation must also summon the resolve to strengthen its own legal foundations, for only strong pillars at home can sustain a resilient edifice abroad.

14. Then each nation to seriously consider the establishment of dedicated Ministry of Law, a step that would not only ensure greater coherence in our national legal ecosystem, but also enable Malaysia to engage more meaningfully with our regional partners in advancing the rule of law. This statement is not smuggled by Azalina binti Othman Said (joking). It's after my strong reflection what I need to do towards the end of this year. By aligning ourselves with the best practices of our neighbors, Malaysia will be better placed to shape a more just and responsive regional order.

15. With this spirit of renewal, ASEAN must continue to invest in mutual legal assistance, strengthen mechanisms for dispute resolution and confront the new challenges of

digital governance and the regulation of artificial intelligence.

16. These are not abstract reforms. They are acts of trust-building, of ensuring that ASEAN remains relevant and resilient in a rapidly changing world.
17. Our region has proven time and time again that disputes can be resolved through dialogue and principled diplomacy. I salute both the leaders of Laos and Cambodia for this commitment to secure lasting, meaningful resolutions of the conflict and lasting peace. **ASEAN's approach to peace has always been one of quiet strength, consensus, and respect.** The same spirit must guide our legal cooperation.

Excellencies, ladies and gentleman,

18. History shows us that confrontation breeds only uncertainty, while dialogue builds the trust needed for lasting stability. We saw this recently when tensions flared as I mentioned, between Thailand and Cambodia. Now, through the ASEAN spirit, the leaders of ASEAN and many other world leaders, we were able to support this effort to mediate, but only through the collective will of ASEAN.

19. And I commend both leaders because both parties agreed swiftly to a ceasefire. This was not just a triumph of diplomacy, but a reminder that even in moments of deep strain Dr. Kao, ASEAN can rise above division and reaffirm its role as a custodian of peace. As Nelson Mandela once reminded us, “Courageous people do not fear forgiving, for the sake of peace.”

20. So, when we strengthen mediation, arbitration, and conciliation, we do more than refine legal processes. We demonstrate our shared commitment to peace, stability, and the rule of law.

21. Now, I understand that the Forum will adopt a **Joint Statement** on Legal Cooperation, Human Rights, and Sustainable Development, and we look forward to translating this resolution into practice. And Malaysia, of course, remains committed in its resolve to translate it into practical action through legal processes and a series of reforms too fast that the Attorney General starts complaining to me that the Ministers wants the legal drafts to be cleared far too quickly, and that it would put a lot of strain on the legal team.

22. But again, as I said, this is effective. What matters more, though, is the resolve to translate aspiration into action, vision into tangible progress for our peoples.

Sekali lagi saya ucap terima kasih.

Wassalammualaikum.