



**MINISTRY OF NATIONAL UNITY**

**SPEECH**

**BY**

**YB DATUK AARON AGO DAGANG  
MINISTER OF NATIONAL UNITY**

**FOR**

**6<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE – FORUM BANGSA MALAYSIA :  
MYTH OR REALITY**

**OCTOBER 4<sup>th</sup> 2023 (SATURDAY)**

**10.00 AM**

**INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED ISLAMIC  
STUDIES (IAIS)**

## **SALUTATIONS**

*\*\*Provided separately*

Salam Perpaduan and Salam Malaysia MADANI.

## **WELCOMING REMARKS**

1. I am truly honoured to be here with you on this auspicious occasion and to deliver the **Keynote Address on a topic (Bangsa Malaysia: Myth or Reality)** which is very close to my heart. As the Minister of National Unity, it is my goal to **enhance and strengthen the quality and spirit of unity, harmony, and humanity** that exist within all our people in this beloved country of ours.
2. Malaysia is truly blessed. We have a beautiful and bountiful country and have enjoyed many years of good fortune. However, like other countries, we have faced our fair share of challenges in our journey as a nation. Recent hardships resulting from the coronavirus and climate change have prompted much reflection on the progress we are making as a united nation.

3. In the past, we used slogans like '**Malaysia Truly Asia,**' '**Enchanting Malaysia,**' '**One Malaysia,**' '**Colours of Malaysia**' and now **Malaysia MADANI** to celebrate our diverse and harmonious society. **Malaysia is a cosmopolitan, friendly, progressive, pluralistic, multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-lingual nation with rich traditions and cultures.**

4. **We have always stood united amidst our differences.** Malaysia prospered due to our diversity, bountiful natural resources, and a strong economy. These headlines and slogans serve as a reminder of what we once were and inspire us to regain that spirit.

Ladies and gentlemen,

### **UNITY, COHESION, AND RECONCILIATION**

5. Unity from Malaysian perspective comprises 3 elements namely **unity, cohesion, and reconciliation** which are viewed as a recurring process.

- **Reconciliation** refers to the ongoing efforts to unite individuals, family, and communities at all societal levels through various programmes and activities implemented by the government.

- **Cohesion** is the state of peace, stability and prosperity that exists in a multiethnic society.
- **Unity is the desired unification** of communities as the **ultimate goal of a multiethnic nation.**

6. Unity is seen as something we desire but currently, **we only experience social cohesion**, whereby Malaysian society, in general, adheres to **the spirit of give and take** and **the spirit of agreeing to disagree**. This leads to reconciliation, which is achieved through bargaining, negotiation, and mediation. Malaysians from various ethnic groups, religious and economic backgrounds live peacefully as they understand, respect and accept the differences of a multicultural society.

Ladies and gentlemen,

### **NATIONAL UNITY INDEX (IPNAS)**

7. The Ministry of National Unity and the Institute of Ethnic Studies (KITA) of the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) have carried out the National Unity Index Model, which was developed

to measure the level of social cohesion. The first IPNas study was conducted in **2018, which recorded 0.567**. This score increased to **0.629 in 2022**. The unity index score in 2022 shows that the level of unity among Malaysian was moderate and under control.

8. From the study, we identified 4 main constructs that influenced social cohesion in Malaysia. The 4 constructs are **Ethnicity, Cross-Ethnic Social Relations, National Ethos, and Governance and Development**. Today, I would like talk bit on National Ethos.
9. The concept of **national ethos refers to Malaysian Nation**. It is related to the collective national emotional attachment toward shared social history, acceptance of the constitution as an integration platform and upholding the Governance and Development that guarantees cohesion, stability, and the well-being of people.
10. The collective national emotional attachment instills loyalty and love for the country, promoting the spirit of patriotism and nationalism, which go beyond the boundaries of ethnicity, religion, and region. In this research, the National Ethos of the Malaysian Nation is formulated and measured based on five

components: **Shared History, Togetherness, Shared Future, Loyalty and Commitment.**

Ladies and gentlemen,

## **BANGSA MALAYSIA**

11. **Social cohesion is a complex and multi-faceted process involving the cooperation and collaboration of different social groups in their daily lives** and struggles to come together around commonalities, while putting aside differences. This can happen within the same ethnic group, or between ethnic groups in order to achieve social outcomes, such as tackling crimes and creating a peaceful and harmonious society, social safety, as well as social progress, such as children's education, elderly welfare, public health, and even common prosperity.

12. Multi-ethnic Malaysia only enjoys "moments of unity", but social cohesion forms the basis of social peace and harmony. Additionally, Bangsa Malaysia is also imagined and 'defined' by the people of various ethnic groups as well as their social organisations in their daily activities through their

cooperation and collective endeavour. The concept of a nation is linked to political identity; it is about the psychological sense of belonging, having a sense of common destiny and a shared future.

13. In fact, in his speech on July 12th, 1971, when tabling the Second Malaysia Plan and the NEP, Prime Minister Tun Razak mentioned the building of a united Bangsa Malaysia as bellow:

“...menyeru seluruh rakyat menumpukan khidmat bakti mereka dalam semangat Rukun Negara untuk membangunkan masyarakat yang adil, saksama dan bangsa Malaysia yang maju, moden dan bersatu padu”

“.....enjoined all the people to concentrate their effort and service in the spirit of Rukun Negara in order to develop a just and equitable society, and a developed, modern and united Bangsa Malaysia”

14. **Polarization, religious intolerance, and exclusivity, combined with economic challenges, provide fertile ground for divisive politics.** Malaysia cannot afford to be distracted by continuous friction, division, and destructive politicking. We must focus on rekindling the flames of unity, embracing our diversity,

and advancing the spirit of harmony and humanity to regain our respected national and economic position.

15. The term “Bangsa Malaysia” comes to the fore in this context, **transcending race and acting as a unifying influence.** It is critical for the successful development of the Malaysia envisioned by our founding fathers. Unity means acting as one people, using our shared history and the strength of our diversity as the foundation for achieving a shared and equitable destiny. Malaysia comprises over 40 ethnicities and three separate territories: Peninsula Malaysia, Sabah, and Sarawak. **Uniting all as one is a formidable task, but it's essential for our nation's stability and prosperity.**

16. The first of these is the challenge of establishing a united Malaysian nation with a sense of common and shared destiny. This must be a nation at peace with itself, territorially, and ethnically integrated, living in harmony and full and fair partnership, made up of one “Bangsa Malaysia” with political loyalty and dedication to the nation.



17. The second is the challenge of creating a psychologically liberated, secure, and developed Malaysian Society with faith and confidence in itself, justifiably proud of what it is and what it has accomplished, robust enough to face all manner of adversity. This Malaysian Society must be distinguished by the pursuit of excellence, fully aware of all its potentials, psychologically subservient to none, and respected by the peoples of other nations.
18. The spirit of unity which should be the main foundation of the country, is seen to be eroding day by day among the people, due to various factors driven by the self-interest of certain parties and groups. **We need to get rid of the stagnant mindset.**
19. **We have discarded the colonial mindset, but the stagnant mindset dominates every aspect of politics, leadership, and national administration, in both the private and public sectors.** This stagnant mindset has caused us to lag behind in several aspects and fields, causing Malaysia to be overtaken by countries that gained independence later after us.

## **WAY FORWARD BY MINISTRY OF NATIONAL UNITY**

Ladies and gentlemen,

20. **Unity is key to the harmony, and well-being of the people and the country.** The Ministry initiated a flagship program called Kembara Perpaduan Malaysia MADANI, consisting of three core clusters, namely **Semarak Kenegaraan, Semarak Perpaduan and Komuniti Rahmah**, to foster unity among the people with the hope of elevating the index to a higher score of at least **0.7 by the year 2025.**

21. **In 2024, we will introduce HARMONI MADANI as the new initiative to foster harmony among Malaysians.** Under this initiative there will be:

- International Day of Peace Celebration
- International Harmony Week
- International Day for Tolerance
- Harmony Madani Roadshow
- Harmony Madani Symposium
- Interfaith Charity Work
- Harmony Dialogue

## CONCLUSION

20. It is also my wish for a Malaysia where we embrace our diversity of ethnicity, religions, and beliefs and, by being inclusive, build mutual respect and acceptance into a solid foundation of trust and cohesiveness. In doing so, people will always be proud to identify themselves as Malaysians, and less by race, religion, geography, or socio-economic background.

21. There is a long road ahead for our nation, and it is important for us to ensure that multi-racial Malaysia continues to be a country that has a conducive and encouraging environment for Malaysians to develop their potential to the fullest. What the forefathers envisioned was a Malaysia which we call home and where we all hold proud our Malaysian identity. To achieve that, **all races must be able to live cohesively and in social equality.**

Thank you.