



**MINISTRY OF NATIONAL UNITY  
NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF MALAYSIA**

## **OPENING SPEECH**

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

**30<sup>th</sup> SOUTHEAST ASIA-PACIFIC AUDIOVISUAL  
ARCHIVE ASSOCIATION (SEAPAVAA)  
CONFERENCE 2026**

**8 JUNE 2026 (MONDAY)**

**9.15 AM**

**HOTEL CASUARINA@MERU  
IPOH, PERAK**

## SALUTATION

*(To be provided separately)*

## INTRODUCTION

1. It is a great honour to address the **30th Southeast Asia-Pacific Audio-visual Archive Association (SEAPAVAA) Conference 2026**. On behalf of the Ministry of National Unity and the Government of Malaysia, I warmly welcome delegates, archivists, researchers, policymakers, technology experts, and cultural heritage professionals from around the world to Ipoh, Perak.
2. Malaysia is proud to host this prestigious gathering once again, following successful conferences in 1999 and 2011. **For three decades, SEAPAVAA has served as a vital platform for regional cooperation, knowledge sharing, and professional excellence in preserving the audio-visual memory of our societies.**
3. The theme of this conference, "**Redefining Audiovisual Archives: Relevancy, Technology and Unity**", is both timely and important. It speaks not only about archives, but about how societies preserve memory, embrace

innovation, and strengthen social cohesion in an increasingly digital world.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

## **AUDIOVISUAL HERITAGE**

4. Audio-visual archives therefore represent far more than technical collections. They are repositories of identity, memory, and collective experience. They preserve the laughter of children, the wisdom of elders, the stories of Indigenous communities, the achievements of nations, and the struggles that shaped our societies.
5. Yet audio-visual materials are among the most vulnerable forms of heritage. Film deteriorates. Magnetic tapes demagnetise. Optical discs become unreadable. Digital files face the risk of technological obsolescence. According to international archival experts, **significant portions of twentieth-century audio-visual heritage worldwide are at risk of being permanently lost if preservation efforts are not accelerated.**
6. **Every lost recording represents an irreplaceable loss to humanity.** When a film decays, when a tape becomes unreadable, or when digital files disappear, we lose part

of our shared memory. We lose voices that can never be recorded again.

7. The international community has long recognised the importance of preserving documentary heritage. **The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization established the Memory of the World Programme in 1992 to safeguard documentary heritage of global significance and ensure universal access to it.** The United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda also emphasises the protection of cultural heritage as an essential component of sustainable and inclusive development.
8. Around the world, leading archival institutions have demonstrated how technology can revitalise historical collections and reconnect communities with their heritage.
9. In **Netherlands, large-scale digitisation initiatives have made millions of audio-visual records accessible online**, allowing citizens, students, and researchers to engage directly with their national memory.

10. In **United Kingdom**, the **British Film Institute** has **successfully restored historic films while creating digital access platforms that engage younger generations** with their cultural heritage.
11. These examples demonstrate that audio-visual preservation is no longer solely the responsibility of archivists. **It has become a national investment in education, innovation, identity, and social cohesion.**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

**EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES THROUGH COMMUNITY ARCHIVES**

12. While national institutions play a critical role in preserving our documentary heritage, the responsibility cannot rest solely with governments and archival professionals. Increasingly, the future of archival preservation depends on active community participation.
13. Recognising this, the **National Archives of Malaysia** has **championed community archive initiatives that encourage citizens to contribute photographs, recordings, documents, oral histories, and family collections that reflect local experiences and**

**community heritage.** This approach ensures that the nation's memory is not confined to official records alone but enriched by the voices and experiences of ordinary Malaysians.

14. **Malaysia's community archiving efforts have become a notable best practice in the region.** Many valuable historical records exist outside formal repositories in family albums, village collections, local associations, places of worship, schools, and personal collections.
15. Through sustained outreach and collection programmes, the National Archives of Malaysia has successfully expanded the nation's documentary heritage. **As of March 2026, a total of 309,740 community archive items have been recorded in the Archives' holdings, with 6,296 items acquired throughout year 2025 alone.** These figures reflect the growing awareness among Malaysians that preserving history is a shared responsibility.
16. **Every family, community, and locality possess stories that contribute to our national narrative. A photograph of a village celebration, an audio**

**recording of traditional music, a video of a community event, or an oral history shared by an elder can provide future generations with invaluable insights into our collective heritage.** Through community archives, ordinary citizens become custodians of history, ensuring that every community sees itself represented in the nation's memory.

17. **Therefore I encourage communities across Southeast Asia and the Pacific to actively participate in documenting and preserving their local histories, traditions, and collective memories.** When preservation becomes a shared responsibility, our archives become richer, more inclusive, and more representative of the diverse societies we serve.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

### **WAY FORWARD**

18. **Artificial Intelligence is transforming archival workflows.** AI can automatically identify faces, objects, locations, and historical events within large collections. Speech recognition technologies can generate transcripts from audio recordings in multiple languages. **Machine learning tools can assist archivists in**

**cataloguing vast quantities of digital content** that would otherwise require years of manual processing.

19. **Advanced restoration technologies are also breathing new life into damaged materials.** AI-assisted restoration can remove scratches from film, improve audio clarity, reconstruct deteriorated footage, and enhance historical recordings while maintaining authenticity.

20. **Cloud-based preservation systems provide scalable and secure storage solutions that protect digital heritage from physical disasters and technological failures.** Emerging technologies such as **immersive reality offer new possibilities for public engagement.**

21. As we look ahead, I propose 4 strategic priorities for the audiovisual archival community.

22. **First: Accelerate Mass Digitisation**

We must urgently digitise vulnerable audiovisual collections before deterioration makes preservation impossible. The next decade will be critical for safeguarding analogue heritage.

**23. Second: Harness Artificial Intelligence Responsibly**

AI should be embraced as a powerful tool for access and preservation while maintaining professional oversight, transparency, authenticity, and ethical standards.

**24. Third: Expand Public Access and Community Participation**

Archives must become more accessible to citizens through online platforms, educational programmes, crowdsourced metadata initiatives, oral history projects, and community archiving efforts.

**25. Fourth: Strengthen Regional and Global Collaboration**

No institution can preserve audiovisual heritage alone. Shared standards, collaborative research, joint digitisation projects, professional exchanges, and technological partnerships will be essential to our collective success.

## **CLOSING**

Ladies and gentlemen,

26. As we celebrate SEAPAVAA's 30-year journey, let us reaffirm a simple but powerful principle: **when we preserve memory, we strengthen identity; when we strengthen identity, we foster understanding; and when we foster understanding, we build unity.**

27. Let us work together to ensure that the audiovisual heritage of our region remains accessible, authentic, and relevant for generations to come.

With that, it is my pleasure to **officially declare the 30th SEAPAVAA Conference 2026 open.**

Thank you.