



MINISTRY OF NATIONAL UNITY

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

**YB DATUK AARON AGO DAGANG  
MENTERI PERPADUAN NEGARA**

**IN CONJUNCTION WITH**

**KITA MEREKA MALAYSIA, CELEBRATING 59 YEARS OF  
THE TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN FOUNDATION**

**7 FEBRUARY 2025 (FRIDAY)**

**PULLMAN HOTEL, KUALA LUMPUR CITY CENTRE**

Salam Perpaduan and Salam Malaysia MADANI

## **SALUTATIONS**

*\*\*Provided separately*

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. Today, we gather to celebrate a significant milestone—the **59th anniversary of the Tunku Abdul Rahman Foundation**. This foundation, established in honour of our beloved Bapa Kemerdekaan, stands as a testament to his unwavering commitment to education, unity, and the betterment of our nation. It is a moment for us to reflect on the enduring legacy of Tunku Abdul Rahman and to recommit ourselves to the values he so passionately championed.
2. Tomorrow, we also mark what would have been the **122nd birthday of Almarhum Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj**, a man whose vision, sacrifice, and leadership shaped the very foundation of our beloved Malaysia. His ideals extend far beyond the road to independence or his tenure as our first Prime Minister. They continue to inspire and guide us in our pursuit of national unity and progress.

3. **Tunku Abdul Rahman believed that unity was the cornerstone of a strong and prosperous nation.** He saw Malaysia as a land where people of all backgrounds regardless of race, religion, or heritage could come together in harmony and mutual respect. **His vision of unity in diversity remains as relevant today as it was decades ago.**

Ladies and gentlemen,

### **CHALLENGES IN PURSUING UNITY**

4. **Unity in diversity has always been our greatest strength.**

Our multicultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious society is a testament to the beauty of coexistence. However, this unity is not something we can take for granted it is our shared responsibility. **Each one of us has a role to play in preserving and strengthening the harmonious spirit that defines Malaysia.**

5. At the Ministry of National Unity, we remain steadfast in our mission to foster a sense of belonging among all Malaysians. Through mutual respect, open dialogue, and cooperation, we can build bridges of understanding and solidarity. Our diversity should never be a source of division but rather a foundation upon which we build a resilient and inclusive society.

6. However, we must acknowledge the challenges that stand in our way. **Social cohesion can be tested by misinformation, prejudice, and economic disparity. Misunderstandings and stereotypes can create rifts between communities, and external influences can sometimes threaten our unity.** Addressing these challenges requires continuous effort, education, and a commitment to upholding the principles of fairness and justice for all.

7. The path to national unity is not without its challenges. However, **by upholding the values of understanding (*faham*), respect (*hormat*) and acceptance (*terima*), we can overcome any obstacle.** Let us take inspiration from Tunku's vision and work hand in hand to ensure that his dream of a united Malaysia continues to flourish for generations to come.

Ladies and gentlemen,

### **THE ROLE OF THE TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN FOUNDATION**

8. The Tunku Abdul Rahman Foundation empowers deserving youth with the capital, opportunities, and skills to build better futures for themselves and Malaysia. Since 1966, the **Foundation has empowered 9,500 young Malaysians** through scholarships, financial aid, and development programs.

9. Today, we celebrate inspiring **Tunku Scholars like Aisyah Maisarah**, a biotechnology student and entrepreneur who led the revitalization of a mini farm at Universiti Malaya. As the founder and CEO of Insective Lab, a social enterprise tackling food waste, she secured an RM35,000 grant from the Ministry of Higher Education.
10. We also recognize **Hezron Nusli**, the first in his family to pursue higher education. He graduated in Plantation Management and is now earning a Master's in Plantation Industry Management while actively working in the field in Sabah.

Ladies and gentlemen,

### **PARTNERSHIPS FOR PROGRESS**

11. It is important to remember that shaping a progressive, inclusive, and equitable Malaysia is a shared responsibility, one that requires collaboration across sectors. **Since 2020, YTAR has established impactful partnerships through MOUs, securing pledges of more than RM22 million, comprising RM5.8 million in cash and RM16.5 million as in-kind sponsorships through university tuition fee waivers.**

12. **Our Closing The Gap programme, focused on higher education access and mentoring, has been made possible through the support of OSK Foundation, which has sponsored multiple cohorts, including our 2024 cohort.**

13. I am also delighted to announce that **CIMB Foundation will be the 2025 sponsor of the Closing The Gap programme.** This partnership will support students in the Klang Valley, particularly those from PPR communities. This programme is also part of the Santuni MADANI initiative, a testament to the impactful public-private collaboration between CIMB Foundation and YTAR.

14. Through the **Tunku Abdul Rahman Scholarship programme**, corporate partners have transformed scholarship giving, making it more equitable and comprehensive. Notably, **Grab Malaysia launched the GrabScholar programme in collaboration with YTAR, sponsoring six scholarships in 2024 and an additional six in 2025.**

15. We are pleased to commemorate Tunku Abdul Rahman's birthday on February 8th by **reopening applications for the 2025 Tunku Abdul Rahman Scholarship.** This comprehensive undergraduate scholarship includes nine

types of allowances and a two-year leadership development programme to nurture young leaders. Applications will be open tomorrow!

16. We are also thrilled to welcome **new private university partners** who have joined this mission through in-kind tuition fee sponsorships such as **IMU University, Sunway Education Group, Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, and Yayasan MSU.**

17. Furthermore, **The FutureReady, in collaboration with Accenture Malaysia,** has successfully supported youth with the future-ready skills needed to excel in today's rapidly evolving job market.

Ladies and gentlemen,

**KITA MEREKA MALAYSIA**

18. As we celebrate the exciting partnerships and programs ahead, let us be reminded that this year's theme, **Kita Mereka Malaysia,** is more than just a statement it is a reminder of the collective spirit of Malaysians and the pivotal role of individuals and communities in shaping a progressive, equitable, and inclusive society.

19. As such, we invite individuals and corporations to join us in shaping Malaysia's future by sponsoring a Scholar through the Tunku Abdul Rahman Scholarship or partnering with us to offer career, development, and mentorship opportunities.

Jom, Kita Mereka Malaysia!

Thank You.