



KEMENTERIAN PERPADUAN NEGARA

SPEECH BY

**HONOURABLE DATUK AARON AGO DAGANG
MINISTER OF NATIONAL UNITY, MALAYSIA**

**“THE 3rd INTERNATIONAL SUMMIT OF RELIGIOUS
LEADERS”**

**12 JUNE 2026
9.00 AM
KLCC**

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

1. Religion has always played a central role in shaping our humanity. At its heart, every faith teaches compassion, justice, and peace.
2. Malaysia today has a population of more than 34 million people, and our society reflects a remarkable tapestry of faiths. According to the Population and Housing Census, **63.5% of Malaysians are Muslims, 18.7% Buddhists, 9.1% Christians, 6.1% Hindus, while the remainder includes Sikhs, Taoists, Bahai and other beliefs.** This demographic composition makes Malaysia one of the most religiously diverse countries in Asia, with virtually every major world religion represented within a single national boundary.
3. For decades, **these diverse communities have lived together with relative peace. This is not by accident, but by design.** Our **Federal Constitution enshrines Islam as the religion of the Federation, while at the same time guaranteeing freedom to practise other religions in peace** and harmony. This dual recognition has been central to Malaysia's success in managing diversity.

4. In addition, our unity is anchored in the **Rukun Negara**, the National Philosophy of Malaysia proclaimed in 1970 after a difficult period in our history. It consists of five guiding principles: **Belief in God, Loyalty to King and Country, Supremacy of the Constitution, Rule of Law, and Courtesy and Morality**. These are not mere slogans, but moral foundations that shape our identity as a nation.
5. The first principle, Belief in God, is especially very important. It affirms that faith in its many expressions is a **unifying force that provides moral compass, humility, and respect for the dignity of life**. It reminds Malaysians that **regardless of our different religions, the recognition of a higher divine presence binds us together in our shared humanity**.
6. In the 21st century, the Rukun Negara remains deeply relevant as more than just a national philosophy, it is a living framework for managing diversity and strengthening resilience in society. **In a world where polarization, extremism, and disinformation too often exploit religion and identity, the Rukun Negara offers Malaysians a common moral compass**. It reminds us that unity cannot be built on tolerance alone, but must be guided by shared principles of faith, loyalty, justice, law, and morality.

7. **This philosophy has enabled Malaysia to avoid the worst consequences of division, even when tested by political change, economic disparity, or global currents of intolerance.** Surveys consistently show that most Malaysians, regardless of background, still see diversity as a source of strength and trust people of other faiths as neighbours, colleagues, and friends. Such attitudes reflect the quiet but enduring influence of the Rukun Negara, which continues to shape not only public policy but also social behaviour at the grassroots level.
8. In today's interconnected world, the relevance of the Rukun Negara goes beyond Malaysia. **It demonstrates how a society can enshrine shared values that transcend race, creed, or culture, while still respecting the distinctiveness of each community.** In essence, it is a reminder that genuine harmony comes not from erasing differences, but from cultivating the discipline, humility, and empathy needed to live with them in peace.
9. Excellencies, my Ministry introduced the four guiding principles of **Understand (Faham), Respect (Hormat), Accept (Terima) and Celebrate (Meraikan)** to safeguard coexistence among Malaysia's diverse communities. These

principles have served as practical tools for building bridges across faiths and cultures.

10. We also have taken this journey a step further with our theme in year 2025 which is “**Harmony in Diversity.**” **Harmony within diverse religions is not simply the absence of conflict; it is the presence of trust, dialogue, and mutual enrichment.** It means that different religions do not merely tolerate each other’s existence, but actively contribute to a shared space where values of compassion, justice, and peace are upheld together.
11. Harmony is when a Muslim joins a Christian neighbour’s Christmas open house, when a Buddhist celebrates Hari Raya with Muslim friends, or when a Hindu and Sikh community come together for a neighbourhood activity. It is in these everyday encounters that diversity becomes strength, not division.
12. **Harmony in diversity is thus both a principle and a practice.** It is a principle because it is rooted in Malaysia’s Constitution, the Rukun Negara, and our long-standing traditions. It is also a practice because it requires daily commitment from institutions, communities, and individuals

to nurture empathy and solidarity across religious and cultural lines.

- 13.** In this spirit, **the Ministry of National Unity celebrates the rich tapestry of Malaysia through our many festivals.** We are truly a country of festivals : Eid Mubarak (Muslim), Chinese New Year (Chinese), Ponggal (Hindu), Thaipusam (Hindu), Deepavali (Indians), Gawai (Dayak), Kaamatan (Kadazan Dusun), Songkran (Siam), Christmas (Christian), Wesak (Buddhist) , Irau Aco (Lun Bawang), and many more, each one not only a celebration of faith and culture, but also an opportunity to bring Malaysians of all backgrounds together in joy, respect, and friendship.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

- 14.** The Ministry of National Unity places strong emphasis on **promoting coexistence, mutual respect, social harmony, and intercultural understanding as the foundation of a united and progressive nation.** In a diverse country like Malaysia, unity is not achieved by similarity, but by embracing differences in race, religion, language, and culture as strengths that enrich our national identity. Through continuous dialogue, community

programmes, and inclusive policies, the Ministry seeks to ensure that every citizen feels valued, respected, and connected to the larger Malaysian family.

15. This agenda is important because diversity if not managed wisely, may give rise to misunderstanding and division. However, when it is guided by **mutual respect, understanding, and shared values, it becomes a powerful source of national strength, innovation, and resilience.**
16. Coexistence is therefore not a passive state, but an active and continuous commitment that must be nurtured with care and consistency. In today's rapidly evolving global environment, shaped by social media, misinformation, and shifting cultural dynamics, the need to strengthen unity has become even more critical in safeguarding stability, harmony, and social cohesion.
17. **To the world, Malaysia stands as a living example that diversity is not a weakness, but a strength that can be harmonised through mutual respect, moderation, and inclusive governance.**

18. Our message to the global community is clear: **peaceful coexistence is possible when societies choose dialogue over division, understanding over prejudice, and unity over conflict.** Malaysia remains committed to sharing this experience as part of its contribution to a more peaceful, tolerant, and interconnected world.

Thank You.