



WELCOMING SPEECH BY

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**GALA DINNER
WORLD SOCIAL SECURITY FORUM 2025**

**2nd October 2025
SALOMA BISTRO, KUALA LUMPUR**

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim.

Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh and Salam Sejahtera. Salam Malaysia MADANI.

(SALUTATIONS)

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Before anything else, allow me to extend my heartfelt congratulations to *Pertubuhan Keselamatan Sosial (PERKESO)* and the *Employees Provident Fund (EPF)* as they mark a remarkable milestone—**54 years since their establishment, on the 1st of October 1971.**
2. For more than half a century, these two institutions have stood as pillars of Malaysia's social protection system. Their journey is not only a story of resilience and commitment, but also a reflection of how collective vision can create lasting impact for millions of Malaysians.
3. It is therefore most fitting that we gather here in Kuala Lumpur to celebrate not only our shared progress globally, but also the legacy of institutions that have safeguarded the lives and dignity of our people for generations.

4. It is truly an honour to welcome all of you this evening to Kuala Lumpur, for the **Gala Dinner of the World Social Security Forum 2025**. I stand before you not only as Malaysia's Deputy Prime Minister, but as someone whose journey began far away, in a humble home in Sibu, Sarawak.
5. I grew up as one of fourteen children in a family that lived modestly, but never without spirit. My story is not one of privilege, but of perseverance and it is a story that shaped the values I carry with me today.
6. Life was not easy. My late father struggled greatly, and my late mother bore the heavy responsibility of raising a large family. To survive, every one of us had to play our part. I still remember walking with my siblings to the market, carrying vegetables, fruits, and whatever farm produce we could gather to sell.
7. Each of us brought only a little, but when we pooled our efforts, it was enough to feed the family. Alone, we would have struggled. Together, we endured.

8. Looking back, I realise that was my very first lesson in **social security**. Many think of social security only as laws, systems, and contributions. But for me, it began much earlier through the lived experience of solidarity.
9. I learned that survival depends on sharing risks, pooling resources, and ensuring that no one is left behind. At its heart, social security is not just a system, but it is a spirit of caring for one another.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

10. The world I grew up in is very different from the one we live in today. Back then, the family and village were the safety net. Neighbours looked out for one another.
11. But today, life is more complex. Families are smaller, people migrate, and work transcends boundaries. Honestly, I see how these changes extend far beyond families, shaping entire societies, economies, and nations.
12. We are now grappling with global realities: ***climate change, energy transition, water security, and shifting***

demographics. What sustained us in the past may no longer be enough for the future.

13. Our task is clear: ***to design protections that safeguard not only people, but also our environment and the generations yet to come.*** The risks are evolving, and so must our resolve.

14. Yes, these challenges can feel overwhelming, the knots too tightly tied. Yet my childhood taught me this truth: ***even the toughest knots loosen when people come together.***

And what brings people together more naturally than food?

15. A shared table dissolves barriers, softens hearts, and reminds us that we are one human family. Around food, we do not sit as officials or delegates, but as friends, brothers, and sisters.

16. In my home of Sarawak, food is more than nourishment. It is memory, celebration, and community. From the legendary Sarawak laksa, once called the ***“Breakfast of the Gods” by the late Anthony Bourdain,***

to kolo mee and umai, each dish tells a story of our rivers, forests, seas, and the biodiversity that sustains us.

17. Tonight, I hope you will experience the warmth of our welcome, the richness of our culture, and the generosity of our hospitality. I invite you one day to journey to East Malaysia, to experience its full flavours, traditions, and hospitality.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

18. As you enjoy this evening, let us remember that policies and frameworks matter, but what gives them life is the human spirit.
19. It is the same spirit that carried my siblings and me through hardship, and the same spirit that has brought us together here tonight. May this gathering strengthen our bonds of friendship, deepen our sense of solidarity, and inspire us to build societies where no one is left behind.
20. With that, I wish you a memorable evening. *Selamat malam, and selamat menjamu selera.*

Thank you.

***Wabillahi taufik wal hidayah, wassalamualaikum
warahmatullahi wabarakatuh.***