

**TEKS UCAPAN Y.A.A.
KETUA HAKIM NEGARA
DATO' WAN AHMAD FARID BIN WAN SALLEH
DI MAJLIS MERAIKAN
PELANTIKAN KETUA HAKIM NEGARA
PADA 6 OGOS 2025**

[SALUTATIONS]

Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh dan salam sejahtera.

1. Marilah kita sama-sama menzahirkan kesyukuran ke hadrat Allah Subhanahu Wataala kerana dengan kurnia dan izinNya dapat kita bersama-sama hadir pada majlis meraikan pelantikan saya sebagai Ketua Hakim Negara pada petang ini.
2. Di majlis ini, saya ingin merakamkan setinggi-tinggi junjung kasih kepada KeBawah Duli Yang Maha Mulia Seri Paduka Baginda Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Ibrahim ibni Sultan Iskandar atas perkenan Baginda melantik saya sebagai Ketua Hakim Negara yang ke-17 atas nasihat YAB Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, Perdana Menteri Malaysia, setelah berunding dengan Majlis Raja-Raja.

Ladies and Gentlemen

3. I thank all the distinguished guests, my brother and sister judges and former judges for making the time to be here this afternoon. I am

deeply moved by your presence although one could say that it is an understatement. Overwhelmed would be nearer to the mark.

4. Let me also thank my learned sister YAA Tan Sri Hasnah binti Dato' Mohamed Hashim, Chief Judge of Malaya, for your Ladyship's incredibly generous words. Looking at the body language of my wife in the gallery, she may be forgiven if she thought that your Ladyship was describing a different person altogether.
5. I also thank Mr Attorney, President of the Malaysian Bar, President of the Advocate's Association of Sarawak and President of the Sabah Law Society for your kind and generous words. I am particularly grateful for the pledges of support that you have extended.

Ladies and Gentlemen

6. The poet and civil rights activist Mary Angelou said:

“I have great respect for the past. If you don’t know where you’ve come from, you don’t know where you’re going.”

7. For the Malaysian judiciary, this means recognising and appreciating – and most importantly, learning from – the events that shaped the judiciary in the past, including the judicial crisis of 1988, and incidents that led to the establishment of the 2007 Royal Commission of Inquiry. Only then will we be able to chart a meaningful future for ourselves.

8. Gleaning insights from the past, three important players within the legal system, namely the Attorney General's Chambers ("AGC"), the Malaysian Bar and its counterparts in Sabah and Sarawak, and most importantly leadership within the judiciary itself, have equally important roles in contributing to judicial integrity in Malaysia.
9. The AGC must at all times ensure that the delicate balance between its prosecutorial powers and its role as the advisor of the government of the day, can be struck. I trust that the AGC will continue to act with impartiality and integrity in upholding the rule of law, and ultimately, in safeguarding judicial independence in Malaysia.
10. Next, the Malaysian Bar. The Malaysian Bar is a statutory creation, and by virtue of section 42(1)(a) of the Legal Profession Act 1976, one of its purposes is to uphold the cause of justice without regard to its own interests or that of its members, uninfluenced by fear or favour.
11. I am proud to have been associated with the Malaysian Bar in the early days of my legal practice. I was the Secretary of the Terengganu Bar Committee at the height of the judicial crisis in 1988 and my car was one of the few in the whole state of Terengganu with a sticker captioned "*Tabik Hormat Untuk Lima Orang Hakim*".
12. I take note that some members of the Bar are very fond of walking. While walking is certainly good for your health, my unsolicited view is, please do it sparingly.

13. While we are on the topic of walking, I am happy to say that I have participated in the KL Bar Run for the past two years. While I am not particularly proud of my running record, I endeavour to improve it at next year's event, with more participation from the Bench. Events such as these should be encouraged, as they strengthen the relationship between the Bench and the Bar. After all, it is far easier for us to reach out to each other and speak on matters of importance, once we've interacted while wearing t-shirts and sweat pants.
14. The judiciary will continue working alongside the Bar and the AGC in upholding justice. In my working visits to the states in the next few months, I will continue my engagement with these stakeholders. I am particularly excited to meet the Young Lawyers Committees of the State Bars. I say so because I am committed to see the improvement of the standards of advocacy amongst young lawyers in our courts. Continuing legal education has always had a special place in my heart – having taught at the law schools in Universiti Teknologi MARA (“UiTM”) and Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (“UniSZA”).
15. Finally, the most important player at the forefront of judicial independence is obvious – it is the leadership within the judiciary itself. For this, I am grateful for the path set by chief justices before myself, and particularly so the chief justices who have led the Malaysian judiciary these past fifteen years. These leaders of the judiciary have collectively made great strides, putting in place institutional and procedural reforms, improving the efficiency of the judiciary, enhancing access to justice, and placing emphasis on the need for a transparent and independent judiciary.

16. My predecessors have led with utmost integrity, and now the baton has been passed at a most pivotal time, with the country watching closely. I stand on the shoulders of giants, and I can only pray that Allah SWT will guide me in the same way He has guided them.

Ladies and Gentlemen

17. I would also like to spend a few minutes to express my profound gratitude to those who have shaped my past.
18. By an accident of history, my legal and judicial career is shaped by two Wan Adnans. The first one is the late Tan Sri Wan Adnan bin Ismail, with whom I did my pupillage in 1986, in Kuala Terengganu. Tan Sri Wan Adnan, as we all know, was later appointed as the President of the Court of Appeal. I can still vividly recall his advice to me on my first day of chambering. He said, *“As a lawyer you must love the law, be passionate about it and embrace it. Be honest, since there is no room for intellectual dishonesty in the course of upholding the interest of your client”*.
19. The second is Dato' Wan Adnan bin Muhammad, my first cousin, who is a former Court of Appeal Judge. I am happy to note that he is here today. When I informed him of my impending elevation as a Judicial Commissioner almost 10 years ago, his advice to me was very simple. He said that whenever I make a decision, I must remember that the choices I make will echo far beyond the confines of my chambers. In the end, we are ultimately answerable to our Creator.
20. It is with their guidance that I continue my judicial path.

21. With this, let me reiterate my commitment to uphold the independence of judiciary – and let it be known that it must be protected at all costs, lest the very fabric of a just society be severely undermined. When all avenues of recourse are closed, the rakyat and even the government will look to the courts for an impartial resolution of their disputes. To my brother and sister judges, let us not fail them.

Ladies and Gentlemen

22. My fellow brother and sister judges, whether you are a Federal Court Judge, a Court of Appeal Judge, a High Court Judge or a Judicial Commissioner, I would like to stress that we are all equals – ranked *pari passu*. I am what the English lawyers would refer to as the *primus inter pares*, the first amongst equals.

23. I am sitting in this chair not because I am the best. Far from it. I was not born great, nor have I achieved greatness. Instead, what I have is simply the responsibility of leadership entrusted to me.

24. Leadership is about *taklif*, which reflects a heavy trust or *amanah* and serious accountability. It is not about *tashrif* or privilege. While it is indeed an honour to serve as judges – let us not forget, even for a moment, the immense duties and accountability that come with it. This is an *amanah* which we have to hold steadfastly in the discharge of our judicial duty.

25. As a judge, it is impossible to please everyone. In every decision we give, at least one party (and sometimes both parties) will not be

satisfied with our decision. That is only to be expected. But in our system, there are avenues for an aggrieved party to take the next course of action. Whatever our decision is, lest we forget, we must ensure that the losing party walks out of our courtrooms feeling satisfied that he was given the right to be heard, to present his evidence and be given his day. Do not shut them out.

Ladies and Gentlemen

26. In this agenda of reform, I would like to see a judiciary that consistently improves its delivery system. In 2011, the World Bank made a recommendation for countries facing judicial backlog to take note of and study the reforms that Malaysia made. In short, we were the trendsetter and became an example for the world.
27. As they say, justice delayed is justice denied. I am aware of litigants who come to the courts seeking justice, but are dissatisfied that it takes years for the matter to be resolved. To them, let me say this: I hear you. Together with my brother and sister judges, we will work together to resolve the backlog of cases throughout the country. To this end, I am happy to inform you that we are working with the government on increasing the number of courtrooms and appointing additional judicial commissioners.
28. In order to reduce the backlog of cases drastically, the judiciary will assign circuit Judges and Judicial Commissioners in various stations to hear ageing cases and dispose them within a specified period. We hope that this would ease the burden of existing Judges and Judicial Commissioners, who can then concentrate on existing cases.

29. To further expand public access to justice, the Judiciary has introduced mobile courts, bringing legal services directly to remote communities, particularly in Sabah and Sarawak. These mobile units, equipped as courtrooms, along with a team lead by a Magistrate, handle matters such as birth registrations, minor offences, and legal documentation on the ground. I am pleased to inform that we are planning to introduce the same service to the Peninsular of Malaysia.
30. Further, there is also a need to form more specialised divisions and sub-divisions of the High Court, especially at the Kuala Lumpur Court Complex. We will explore this, in order to expose our judges to more complex areas of the law and therefore enhance their expertise in these areas. There is also the need to continually enhance the standards of the Commercial Division of the High Court in Kuala Lumpur, to maintain the confidence of investors, whose disputes will be heard there.
31. Circuit sittings of the Federal Court and the Court of Appeal across Peninsular Malaysia will also be revived. This move will allow greater access to proceedings of the apex courts, to both litigants and lawyers outside the Klang Valley.
32. Finally, there is a more urgent need than ever, for judges to embrace fast-paced technological developments, which is the epicentre of the human experience today. COVID-19 had accelerated the use of technology in businesses and in our daily lives, and consequently in courts around the world. The adoption of technology in our courts will continue, as it enhances the efficiency of the court system and allows

better access to justice. The judiciary will closely follow technological developments, and in particular, the impact of the evolution of artificial intelligence. We will ensure that our judges are sufficiently equipped not only to use technology in courts, but also to manage issues relating to technology.

33. I am not going to promise any miracles. But these are the reforms that the judiciary will immediately take to improve our delivery system. Let us be a towering example on the world stage.

Ladies and Gentlemen

34. One final word. One of the most influential contributors to the principle that power must not be concentrated in one person or institution, but rather divided among different branches of government to prevent tyranny and protect liberty was the French philosopher, Montesquieu. In *The Spirit of the Laws*, he wrote, “*There is no liberty if the judiciary power be not separated from the legislative and executive.*”
35. I have had a long and varied career. I have served in all three branches of government. I cannot erase my history, political or otherwise. Nor do I want to. That is who I am. But as I assume this most solemn *amanah* and for as long as I occupy this chair, I give you my unconditional pledge, in the name of my Creator, *Bismillahhirahmanirrahim*, that I will vigorously protect and relentlessly safeguard the independence of our branch of government with every fibre of my being.

36. And now let us look forward to the future of our judiciary. One that is independent, resilient, efficient, learned and future-proof. Let us do this for our beloved country. To my fellow brother and sister judges, to the judicial officers throughout the country, to Mr Attorney and his able officers at the AGC, to the Malaysian Bar, the Sabah Law Society, the Advocates Association of Sarawak and other stakeholders, let us chart this future together by working *with* me.
37. I pledge to do my level best towards the betterment of the Malaysian judiciary and its independence. Let there be a strong message of the independence of the judiciary, which shall continue to be loud and clear, echoing not just through the halls of the Palace of Justice and other courthouses but also through all corners of our society, and all the corridors of power in our country.

Thank you very much.

Persidangan ditangguhkan.