



**KEYNOTE ADDRESS OF MINISTER IN THE PRIME
MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT (PARLIAMENT AND LAW)
FORUM ON RIGHT TO INFORMATION IN CONJUNCTION
WITH INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY (IHRD)
10 DECEMBER 2021**

BISMILLAHIRRAHMAANIRRAHIM

**Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh. A Very
Good Evening and Salam Keluarga Malaysia,**

1. YBhg. Datuk Haji Mohd Rabin bin Basir,

Director General of Legal Affairs Division

Prime Minister's Department

2. YBhg. Dato' Mah Weng Kwai,

Commissioner, Human Rights Commission of Malaysia

3. YBrs. Ms Wathshlah G Naidu

Executive Director of Centre for Independent Journalism

4. Panelist and Moderators

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. It is a great pleasure and honour for me to share my aspiration in steering Malaysia **towards Freedom of Information** here at the **Forum on Right to Information in Conjunction with International Human Rights Day (IHRD)** with everyone today. I would like to express my deepest appreciation to the Legal Affairs Division of The Prime Minister's Department, Centre for Independent Journalism (CIJ) and Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM) for organizing such an exceptional event.

2. As everyone comprehend, the International Human Rights Day celebrates a broad range of **fundamental rights and freedoms to which all of us are entitled**. It guarantees the rights of every individual, without distinction based on **nationality, place of residence, gender, national or**

ethnic origin, religion, language, or any other status. In

relation to this:

“Freedom of information is a fundamental human right and...the touchstone of all the freedoms to which the United Nations is consecrated.” (UN General Assembly Resolution 59, 1946)

3. Today’s forum on Right to Information holds a significant impact for Malaysia in the current global human rights scenario, as the country is currently working towards a transparent and open nation. The initiative clearly supports the awareness of public towards their right in getting **accurate and reliable information in a timely manner.** This event is also in line with the Government’s aspirations to introduce a legislation on Freedom of Information to provide access to accurate and reliable information to the public.

4. For this effort, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate each and every one who have been involved in this forum. This forum is a continuation of the Government's effort to ensure proper engagement with stakeholders on the proposal to enact a Freedom of Information legislation.

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

5. The Right to Information facilitates the public in forming opinions about issues that affect us, thus promotes constructive participation in any debate or discussion related to specific decision-making process. It ensures public interest, transparency and enhances participatory democracy, good governance and strengthening the rule of law. As a democratic nation, the Government has been focused towards its commitment in expanding the human rights of its people to include the right to access to information.

6. I acknowledged the public demand for the free flow of information which are crucial to achieve accountability and transparency and ultimately helping the public make informed decisions. Failure to obtain precise data will lead to the spread of fake news, let alone in the current situation which can easily cause panic and chaos among the Rakyat as what we had experienced during the initial stage of the COVID-19 pandemic.

7. Fundamentally, the new cutting edge of technology plays important role in defining information as a commodity where it is interchangeable and transferable. Having said so, building up a strong policy of Right to Information in Malaysia needs the setting of the right parameter for the drafting process. The enactment of this legislation must consider the right balance between private and public interest, not forgetting the importance of protecting national security and public order.

8. In addition, the possibility of enacting this law is indeed a complement to the existing Open Data initiative or Open-Government among others, which houses datasets from the various ministries to state governments, police authorities and even the Department of Statistics Malaysia. Furthermore, the openness of Government for public information may also be provided via various platforms such as official portals and social media of the Ministries/Departments nationwide.

9. While we can agree that having this Act or law on Right to Information is vital to Malaysia today, we cannot disregard information sharing and guarding national interest is as crucial as drafting the law itself. More importantly, making sure the effectiveness of the Act and its benefit to the public are far more challenging than the drafting process

10. Therefore, I hope this forum is able to achieve its objectives and I welcome your input for the Government to deliberate further decision on the enactment of this law. I wish everyone a happy International Human Rights Day 2021 and may all of you have wonderful session ahead.

Thank you.