



**WELCOMING REMARK**  
**DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE LEGAL AFFAIRS DIVISION**  
**PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT**  
**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. The Hon. Dato Sri Dr. Haji Wan Junaidi bin Tuanku Jaafar**  
Minister of The Prime Minister's Department (Parliament and Law)
- 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. The Government's decision on the 11<sup>th</sup> July 2018 to enact Freedom of Information Act as a federal legislation has always been the breakthrough for Malaysia towards more significant development in**

relation to the Right to Information (RTI). Internationally, Article 23 of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (AHRD) which affirmed all the civil and political rights in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and which was adopted by heads of member states of ASEAN including Malaysia in 2012, states that *“every person has the right to freedom of opinion and expression, including freedom to hold opinions without interference **and to seek, receive and impart information, whether orally, in writing or through any other medium of that person’s choice.**”*

2. For that, I am very pleased to have everyone on board for the **Forum on Right to Information (RTI) in Conjunction with the International Human Rights Day (IHRD)**. 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 important event. The forum today shows Government’s commitment to ensure what was embraced back in 2012 has always been one of the focus for the rights of Malaysian.
3. Celebrating the International Human Rights Day today signifies the protection of human rights in Malaysia as indicated in the Constitution. In other words, human rights are rights inherent to all **human beings, whatever our nationality, place of residence, gender, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status**. All Malaysians are equally entitled to our human rights without discrimination. These rights are all interrelated, interdependent and indivisible.

4. Today's forum on Right to Information supports the Government's initiative to introduce a legislation on Freedom of Information. The goal mainly is to provide access to accurate and reliable information for the public. No one can deny the fact that good information improves decision making, enhances efficiency and provides a competitive edge for all of us. Based on this understanding, the proposed initiative of the Freedom of Information Act has to consider basic principles of making government information available to all quarters of the community.
  
5. In addition, proper engagement with various stakeholders on the proposal to enact a Freedom of Information legislation is one way to gauge public opinion, inputs and ideas in relation to what should be the right parameter for this new Act. Since January 2020, several engagements took place involving Federal Ministries/Departments, States Government, series of collaborations with CSOs/NGOs and legal experts as well discussions/workshops with academicians and certain groups of societies. Overall, these approaches promote **trust, inclusion and shared-purpose to what has been initiated by the Government.**

**Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

6. In Malaysia, only Selangor and Penang have enacted their own Freedom of Information Enactments (FOIE)s to provide an avenue for information held by the respective state governments to be shared with the public. As a comparison, more than 125 countries in the world has enacted right to information laws. However,

legislating alone is not enough and implementation is vital. Therefore, proper engagement, studying and reviewing both state enactments and country comparison is important in our step towards enacting this legislation.

7. As we are now discussing about the openness and transparency of drafting a Right to Information law, guarding and protecting official documents related to national interests, security and public defence has always been top priority of the Government. The possible co-existence of both Official Secrets Act 1972 and Freedom of Information law will be further discussed in this forum. I am sure that the topic will have much attention from all participants.
  
10. Before I conclude, I hope that each of you will gain benefit from the session. All your inputs are very important for BHEUU JPM to finalize the policy paper which will be the stepping stone towards the enactment of this law. With that, I wish everyone a happy International Human Rights Day 2021 and stay safe wherever you are.

Thank you.