

**WELCOMING REMARKS BY
YB DATO' SAIFUDDIN ABDULLAH, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AT THE ROYAL ADDRESS OF
THE INSTITUTE FOR DIPLOMACY AND FOREIGN RELATIONS (IDFR)
18 NOVEMBER 2021**

“SHAPING A NEW GENERATION OF MALAYSIAN DIPLOMATS”

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim,

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh dan Salam Sejahtera.

Mengadap Duli Yang Maha Mulia Paduka Seri Sultan Perak Darul Ridzuan Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah Ibni Almarhum Sultan Azlan Muhibbuddin Shah Al-Maghfur-Lah

Ampun Tuanku beribu ampun, sembah patik mohon diampun.

Patik bagi pihak Kementerian Luar Negeri amnya dan Institut Diplomasi dan Hubungan Luar khususnya, dengan penuh hormat dan takzimnya merafak sembah menjunjung setinggi kasih di atas limpah perkenan Duli Yang Maha Mulia Tuanku sudi mencemar duli berangkat ke Majlis Titah Diraja 2021 pada pagi yang sungguh permai ini.

Sesungguhnya patik dan para tetamu merasa amat terharu di atas keberangkatan Duli Tuanku ke majlis ini. Tentunya ianya akan menjadi suatu kenangan yang amat indah buat patik sekalian.

Ampun Tuanku,

Patik pohon limpah perkenan Duli Tuanku untuk patik turut mengalu-alukan para hadirin sekalian.

YAB Dato' Saarani Mohamad
Menteri Besar Perak

Yang Berbahagia Orang Besar – Orang Besar Jajahan Perak

YBhg. Tan Sri Muhammad Shahrul Ikram Yaakob
Ketua Setiausaha, Kementerian Luar Negeri

YBhg. Dato' Dr. Shazelina Zainul Abidin
Ketua Pengarah, Institut Diplomasi dan Hubungan Luar Negeri,

Pesuruhjaya-Pesuruhjaya Tinggi dan Duta-Duta Besar

Mantan Duta-duta Besar Malaysia,

Dif-Dif Kehormat,

Tuan-Tuan dan Puan-Puan para hadirin yang dihormati sekalian.

Ampun Tuanku,

Izinkan patik untuk meneruskan ucapan dalam Bahasa Inggeris.

Your Royal Highness, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is delighted to welcome His Royal Highness, the Sultan of Perak Darul Ridzuan and all distinguished guests to the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations (IDFR) this auspicious morning. We are indeed honoured and privileged to have His Royal Highness grace our occasion as the Royal Patron of IDFR at this third Royal Address.

2. IDFR is an important part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As the Ministry's training arm, it provides our diplomats with skills and training in the broad areas of diplomacy, foreign relations and foreign languages. This year, this institute is celebrating its 30th Anniversary of establishment – a milestone on its own.

3. On that note, I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate IDFR for its 30 years of excellence, and may this institute continue to flourish in years to come. I would also like to take a minute to appreciate the first Director General of IDFR, Dato' Albert S. Talalla, who is here with us today. In 1991, Dato' Albert Talalla, fresh from his stint as Ambassador to the United States, was tasked to establish this institute. The rest, as they say, is history. In the institute's 30 years, 12 of the Ministry's top diplomats have served as its Director General, some of whom are also here today. On behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia, we pay tribute to them, and their staff, and thank them for their diligence and service.

Your Royal Highness, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

4. The establishment of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia dates back 65 years ago to 1956. In managing the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), as it was initially called, a pioneer batch of 11 career diplomats were sent to Britain and Australia for training. Today, Malaysia has a network of 110 diplomatic missions spanning the globe. At the helm is IDFR, the training centre of our diplomats.

5. Back then, diplomacy was practiced the traditional way through face-to-face communications, meetings and ground-work to build networks. Through these methods, we were able to shine brightly in the international stage. However, in the post-pandemic world, it is a different ball-game altogether.

6. Today, a simple task such as networking has proven to be a challenge. There is little or no contact with our stakeholders. Physical presence is no longer a selling factor. This proves to be quite a challenge as the cornerstone of a diplomat is building rapport and networking. Without being able to see each other face-to-face, we lose the value of presence and we do not get to feel the aura of meeting someone in-person. It is hard to be a 'virtual salesperson', but not totally impossible.

7. So, we learn to be digital diplomats. Partly, this is because of the pandemic. But, even without the pandemic, the advancement of technology, especially telecommunication technology is inevitable.

8. Our most valuable asset - our diplomats - must be equipped with the right skills and knowledge to prevail, and this is where this institute comes in.

Your Royal Highness, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

9. On 3 November 2021, the Cabinet approved the "Focus in Continuity: A Framework for Malaysia's Foreign Policy in a Post-Pandemic World". This framework is a manifestation of the Government's efforts to address the public interest, well-being and in order to address the immediate challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is not a realignment from the established tenets of Malaysia's foreign policy or its national interests. Neither does it mark a radical departure in Malaysia's diplomatic and outreach strategies to the world. Our fundamentals remain the same, as we strategize towards new approaches and areas.

10. The approaches and issues are (i) revitalise Malaysia's links to the global economy; (ii) health diplomacy; (iii) digital economy; (iv) cybersecurity; (v) cultural diplomacy; (vi) peaceful coexistence; (vii) upholding multilateralism; and (viii) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Your Royal Highness, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

11. The Royal Address by His Royal Highness Paduka Seri Sultan Nazrin has come to be one of the features in IDFR triennial repertoire. We eagerly await with anticipation the speech by His Royal Highness, knowing full-well the gems of wisdom that he always imparts; the eloquence and his well-known depth of dictum.

Ampun Tuanku,

12. Dengan penuh rendah takzim, patik mohon perkenan Duli Tuanku bagi menzahirkan titah Tuanku.

Menjunjung Kasih Tuanku.