

SPEECH BY
YANG BERHORMAT DATO' KAMARUDIN JAFFAR
DEPUTY MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AT THE GRADUATION CEREMONY OF
DIPLOMA IN DIPLOMACY (DiD) 2020

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim,

Assalamu'alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh, and good afternoon to all.

Yang Berbahagia Dato' Sri Muhammad Shahrul Ikram Yaakob
Secretary General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

Yang Berbahagia Dato' Mohd Zamruni Khalid
Director General, Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations,

Senior Officials of Wisma Putra and respective agencies,

Distinguished Guests,

Graduating Class of Diploma in Diplomacy 2020,

Members of the media,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. First of all, I would like to thank IDFR for extending the invitation to me to be here this afternoon. I would also like to extend a warm greeting from YB Dato' Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein, the Minister of Foreign Affairs who could not be with us this afternoon. He sends his regards to everyone here today and wishes everyone to be in the best of health. As we know, we are here to celebrate a historic beginning of 22 young

diplomats' journey to a new phase of their diplomatic careers and I am honoured to be a part of their story.

2. This would be the first time that I address the junior diplomats in the Malaysian Foreign Service since becoming the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs earlier this year. Seeing all of you today — fresh-faced and high-spirited — sparked more enthusiasm and strong believe that we are in good hands of the future leaders of Malaysia.

3. I was informed that the Diploma in Diplomacy (D.I.D) programme is a part of a series of training programmes provided by IDFR since its inception in 1991. It is a mandatory prerequisite training programme for all junior diplomats before they can be posted overseas. The objective of this flagship programme is to equip aspiring diplomats with the necessary skills and knowledge to carry out their duties in the diplomatic arena and beyond.

4. I was also made to understand that these 22 young diplomats hailing from Wisma Putra and the Prime Minister's Department embarked on an 8- month journey in what was supposed to be a 6-month long programme. The overall duration of this course was extended an additional 2 months due to the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic. I am glad to note that IDFR has been adapting well with the "new norms" in conducting the courses while managing to accomplish all the set objectives. In the end, I'm pleased that every participant was successful in overcoming the obstacles brought about by the pandemic and in completing this course with distinction.

Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen

5. Since the establishment of Wisma Putra in 1956, the diplomatic practice of Malaysia has evolved and advanced into what it is today. Our 107 active missions abroad are testimonial to the good bilateral relations between Malaysia and other countries. At

the same time, Malaysia, has also significantly contributed at the multilateral fora, by being elected four times as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council between 1965 to 2016; to participating in over 30 pro-active peacekeeping roles from Congo to Bosnia Herzegovina to the Middle East. Regionally, Malaysia; who is the founding member of ASEAN, continues to play a prominent and active role through a strong and inclusive ASEAN in addressing the geopolitical, economic and social challenges of the world.

6. All these achievements would not have been made possible without the excellent and dedicated services of our former and present diplomats. They have worked tirelessly to uphold Malaysia's sovereignty and to defend our national interests at various international fora. They persevered despite multiple challenges that they have to face in the forms of physical and invisible adversaries.

7. Speaking of unseen threats, 2020 will always be remembered as an extraordinary year for the whole world with great challenges including for the Foreign Service. The unprecedented spread of Covid-19 has affected everyone, and our diplomats were crucial players at the forefront to offer timely and effective consular assistances to Malaysia's diaspora abroad as the crisis escalated. Officials at the Ministry and our embassies overseas worked tirelessly around the clock to render help to stranded Malaysians and bring them home safely. I am very proud of the work we have done and I applaud all diplomatic front-liners for the tremendous efforts they have undertaken to ensure the safety of all Malaysians.

8. At the same time, diplomats who perform their duty in the background continued working tirelessly with their host nations. As a result, we managed to maintain good bilateral relations with these countries. Not only that, on occasions, we also received assistance in kind and in services from some foreign countries while continuing cooperation with them in the exchanges of information and best practices in this difficult time.

For the DiD Class of 2020, I have these to say,

9. As diplomats, you should always be one step ahead of your international peers. Benchmark yourself against the best. If you cannot be better, then at least be at par with them. The same for your colleagues, find the best and benchmark against them. Only then would you be able to be the best amongst the best.

10. I also urge you to continuously improve yourselves. The duties of diplomats are constantly evolving and the challenges are diverse. We cannot predict the future, but we can be ready for it. Therefore, it's imperative for young diplomats to be versatile, keep up with the changes and adapt quickly to the times ahead. There are many course and other trainings to offer throughout your service. Seize them. Acquire knowledge, learn a new language and constantly develop yourselves through training.

11. Furthermore, as young diplomats, you must always keep up and be up to date with new and unprecedented challenges to how diplomacy is conducted. Embrace technology and digitalization. We now live in the era where information is readily available at your fingertips. As the flagbearers of the Malaysian diplomatic service, you should be well-rounded, savvy, multidisciplinary players to face the challenges in your diplomatic journey. Use technology sensibly to our advantage.

12. Most importantly, never forget to uphold the highest standard of integrity and professionalism. Diplomats act in accordance with their own core values and that of the organization they represent. This expectation demands prudence, care and being virtuous. Being a good diplomat involves setting a good example and showing others what it means to have integrity and honesty in all dealings. Being the faces of Malaysia, it is your responsibility to show the world that we have an honourable diplomatic corp.

13. I would also like to remind all of you on the importance of humility. In the diplomatic service, you can never lose by being humble. It shows a lot of character by how you treat others. As the Malay proverb goes, *Ular menyusur akar tidak hilang bisanya*. You will not

lose your greatness and dignity by being humble. In fact, it is by being humble that you become great and dignified.

Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen

14. Once again, I would like to express my appreciation to IDFR on successfully organising the DiD programme, I believe that this programme has provided a good grounding for young diplomats to develop into well-rounded and dynamic foreign service officers. The training programme ranging from modules on diplomatic skills, languages, culture, international relations, soft skills among others, is designed to equip young diplomats with the necessary knowledge and skills to work at our Missions abroad.

15. I trust that the eight months in this programme have been an enriching experience for each one of you. Nevertheless, it is just the beginning, keep on learning and embrace new knowledge and skills to keep yourselves relevant as Foreign Service officers. Hence, it is my greatest wish that you will continue to give your fullest commitment to the Ministry. I am confident that together, we will be able to execute our duties in furthering and protecting Malaysia's national interests and foreign policies internationally.

16. I would also like to take this opportunity thank the spouses and family members of DiD 2020 for their patience and support towards their loved ones as they embark on the journey of putting the national interest above all.

17. With that I would like to invite everyone to join me in congratulating the graduates of the Diploma in Diplomacy, class of 2020 on their completion of the course.

Congratulations and well done!

Thank you.

Wabillahi Taufik Walhidayah

Wassalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh