

Malaysian Bar President's Address
International Malaysia Law Conference 2026
28 October 2026 | MITEC, Kuala Lumpur

SALUTATIONS

1. The Right Honourable Tun Wan Ahmad Farid bin Wan Salleh, Chief Justice of Malaysia;
2. The Right Honourable Dato' Seri Abu Bakar bin Jais, President of the Court of Appeal;
3. The Right Honourable Dato' Sri Hajah Azizah binti Haji Nawawi, Chief Judge of Sabah and Sarawak;
4. The Right Honourable Lord Neuberger of Abbotsbury, International Judge of the Singapore International Commercial Court, former President of the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom, and our keynote speaker;
5. Honourable Judges of the Federal Court, Court of Appeal and all other judges present, local and foreign;
6. Honourable Past Presidents of the Malaysian Bar;
7. My fellow office bearers: Murshidah, Jaya, and Peter;
8. Greg and Marisa, Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the IMLC Organising Committee;
9. Members of the Bar Council;
10. Distinguished speakers and moderators, fellow members of the Bar, delegates, ladies and gentlemen;
11. And last but not least, the Bar Secretariat team and sponsors and supporting organisations.
12. A very good morning to all of you and thank you for making this conference possible. It is my pleasure to welcome all of you to the International Malaysia Law Conference of 2026. To our guests from abroad, welcome to Kuala Lumpur. My deepest regrets and sincerest apologies for the haze, and thank you for braving it to be with us today.
13. This year's theme is "Managing Core Principles in a Time of Change". The Malaysian Bar first organised the Malaysian Law Conference way back on 15 July 1971. We have had numerous

MLCs. In 2012, the Malaysian Bar relaunched this flagship conference as the International Malaysia Law Conference, or IMLC, to better reflect the subjects covered and its international flavour.

14. I remember speaking on numerous MLC panels before it became the IMLC, and I remember speaking on a couple of panels at the first IMLC, and I could not have known then that I would have the privilege to do the opening this year.
15. Reflecting on IMLC 2012, my predecessor, Lim Chee Wee, noted that the then Prime Minister had described the Malaysian Bar as an important partner, while the then Chief Justice called us an equal partner in the administration of justice. These are words of tremendous import and great responsibility.
16. The Bar is ever ready, willing and able to work with the Bench, the Government and civil society organisations to improve the law and justice. The Bar must also be able to speak candidly to highlight and call out shortcomings as well as gaps in both expectations and the delivery of services to the public and in the administration of justice, and to speak when reforms are needed or if they fall short of the mark.
17. Thinking back to that first IMLC, Chee Wee called for a permanent and independent law reform commission. In fact, the Bar has been calling for this for decades; it's nothing new. Fourteen years on, that call remains relevant and more urgent than ever before. IMLC 2012 also addressed prosecutorial independence, judicial appointments, laws affecting liberty and access to justice; these remain live questions for the Malaysian Bar and Malaysia even today.
18. The Malaysian Bar continues to call for vigilance in upholding the rule of law and constitutionalism, recognising that "*rights are trumps*", to quote Ronald Dworkin. We also call for a genuine and meaningful separation of the offices of the Attorney General and the Public Prosecutor. We further call for a limit of two terms (not 10 years) on the tenure of the Prime Minister. We call for credible and transparent judicial appointments, meaningful freedom of information, stronger whistleblower protections, greater judicial scrutiny and regulation of administrative and executive conduct, and reforms and, where necessary, repeal of laws that unduly restrict liberty and expression.

19. AI and the tension between artificial intelligence and actual intelligence present another test of our core principles. These concerns, however, extend beyond the profession and the courtroom and we will continue to grapple with these issues during this IMLC.
20. The Bar's responsibilities also extend beyond our borders. We must do our part, and we call upon Malaysia to uphold international law and its institutions. In giving effect to this, we call upon the Malaysian Government to uphold and apply rules of customary international law and *jus cogens* in the governance of our nation. We also call upon the Malaysian Government to sign the Convention for the Protection of the Profession of the Lawyer, promoted by the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE).
21. Thinking back to 1969, our former President, the late and eminent Yang Mulia Raja Aziz Addruse, reminded us that, in upholding and preserving the rule of law without fear or favour, the legal profession had come to be regarded as the sentinel and guardian of the fundamental rights of the individual. So what we learn at these IMLCs must find its way into our practice, our institutions and our service to the public and the nation.
22. As the Malaysian Bar completes its 79th year and approaches its 80th anniversary, we should consider how we honour that history and legacy. Our longevity should be celebrated, not with balloons or confetti, but by our unflinching commitment to uphold the cause of justice without regard to our own interests or those of our members, uninfluenced by fear or favour.
23. Looking ahead and before I close, I invite you to support and attend the Malaysian Bar's Human Rights Festival ("HRF") 2026 on 13 December this year. First held in 2022 to commemorate the annual Human Rights Day, our HRF has grown into the Malaysian Bar's largest platform and flagship event connecting the legal profession, civil society and the public through human rights advocacy and community engagement, through which we seek to create safe spaces for all civil society organisations, human rights organisations and human rights defenders and champions.
24. With that and in closing, I wish you all a fruitful conference, and remember, we encourage candour in the expression and exchange of views and robust discussions and conversations.

Thank you.