



MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

## SPEECH

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**FOR**

**MALAYSIA BIODIVERSITY CENTRE TOWNHALL**

**22 AUGUST 2024 (THURSDAY)**

**LEO MOGGIE CONVENTION CENTRE, TNB PLATINUM**

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Assalamualaikum Waramatullahi Wabarakatuh, Salam Sejahtera and Salam Malaysia Madani.

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

**INTRODUCTION**

1. I want to welcome the corporate leaders and philanthropists who have joined us today to explore how we can realise the **Malaysia Biodiversity Centre**, a project that has been more **than 26 years in the making**. Thank you for taking the time to be here and for your strong commitment towards our country's most precious asset: its natural heritage.
2. I think there is little need for me to delve extensively into Malaysia's extraordinary biodiversity or why it matters, not only to the rakyat but also the wider world. The heartfelt words of our speakers and presenters have already enlightened and inspired us. Thank you to each and every one of you.
3. Malaysia's status as one of the world's 17 megadiverse countries, as a "biodiversity superpower," is not only a point of pride for us but also a responsibility. The world expects us to be proactive in charting transformative change in biodiversity conservation as well as to address biodiversity loss. What we do or fail to do will hence impact not only our biodiversity but also our national reputation and, considering how the environment and economic prosperity are linked, also the bottom lines of our corporations.

## **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MBC**

Ladies and gentlemen,

4. Almost every megadiverse country has a centre of excellence for biodiversity management. However, Malaysia is one of the few countries without one at the national level.
5. It is true that Sabah, Sarawak, and Pahang have established state-level facilities earlier. There is hence an earnest need for a national-level centre to complement the state efforts.
6. Therefore, I strongly believe that we need to strengthen our national institutional framework for biodiversity conservation by establishing a national biodiversity centre of excellence as a prominent scientific, educational, cultural, and tourism landmark. As such, this event marks a very crucial point in our efforts to realise the MBC.
7. As I said earlier, Malaysia has been talking about creating an MBC in one form or another for 26 years now. We now have a unique opportunity in our history to get it done—at a time when sustainability is increasingly on the minds and lips of Malaysians, as well as people all over the world. Like so many other things we're trying to achieve at this juncture of history—the time is now.
8. The MBC will excel in several core functions, including the management of scientific collections and biodiversity databases, the coordination of scientific research for the science and policy interface, the establishment of centres for advanced training in biodiversity, the organisation of exhibitions and outreach programmes, the provision of advisory and consulting services, and as a major visitor attraction.

9. It will hence be more than just a museum—which is important in and of itself—but also a living, breathing, dynamic institution to push not only biodiversity conservation but Malaysia’s mastery and immersion of science forward.

## THE PROGRESS OF THE MBC

Ladies and gentlemen,

10. Having led the efforts for the establishment of the MBC since 2022, I am pleased to report that efforts to make it a reality are increasingly bearing fruit. Recent developments, among others, have shown promising outcomes:
  - i) The **National Biodiversity Council** on 22nd March 2023, and the Cabinet on 31st March 2023, have agreed in principle with the establishment of the MBC and suggest obtaining part of the funding through corporate social responsibility (or CSR—that is where you all come in);
  - ii) The Cabinet approved the **National Biological Diversity Policy 2022–2030** on 18th October 2023, outlining the importance of the MBC and targeting its operation before 2030;

- iii) The cooperation in strengthening and enriching the **Malaysia Biodiversity Information System (MyBIS)** has increased the national biodiversity database to 1.2 million items of data, including 600 biodiversity expert directories and 11,000 images;
- iv) The **National Biodiversity Scientific Collection Inventory Programme** has successfully built national capacity in biodiversity scientific collection management, documenting more than 172,000 items, including 24,561 digital images;
- v) During a **town hall session on 17th July 2024**, more than 30 local universities and research institutions expressed strong support for the establishment of the MBC; and
- vi) The Ministry has submitted an application for a development budget amounting to RM140 million over a four-year period to construct the MBC building.

11. These progressive achievements reflect the government's commitment and seriousness in realising the MBC. We have the will— all we need is part of the funding and again, this is where you all come in.

## **A CALL TO ACTION**

Ladies and gentlemen,

12. In order for the MBC to effectively undertake its core functions, it must equip itself with state-of-the-art facilities and benchmark its performance against the world's leading biodiversity centres.
13. These include strong scientific research programmes; excellent physical facilities for the storage of scientific specimens; strong exhibition and other public outreach activities; rapid build-up of scientific collections; modern laboratories; scientific relations and collaborative programmes with leading international universities and research institutions; and comprehensive database facilities.
14. In this context, the government may not be able to accomplish these needs on its own, despite its best efforts. This is where corporate bodies and philanthropists can play a vital role. Hence, I encourage everyone present here today to support this endeavour by providing the necessary resources. I also invite corporate bodies and philanthropies to participate in several segments of the MBC's exhibitions.

So, the vision is there. The plan is outlined. The location has been identified.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to Malaysia Biodiversity Centre [[video starts playing](#)]

15. Perhaps I haven't expressed it entirely, but the MBC, as a premier visitor centre, will showcase the wonders of Malaysia's biodiversity, offering people from all walks of life the opportunity to experience biodiversity firsthand and deepen their understanding of nature.
16. I know money is often hard to part with today. And that there are so many worthy causes before us, appealing for our support and resources. But I want to argue that the MBC is one that stands out among many because it will protect and grow something so very precious for our future generations: namely a biodiverse land of beauty and sustainability.
17. Imagine: in fact, don't even imagine. Instead, let me tell you what is going to happen 50, 60 or 70 years from now after most of the people present here today have departed this life. A young Malaysian girl or boy is going to walk into the MBC, maybe with their parents or part of a school tour. They're going to learn that Malaysia's very land has been blessed with majestic forests, seas, mountains and rivers as well as wonderful flora and fauna. They're going to understand why protecting all this is important to ensure they can grow up healthy and strong.
18. They will learn why our forests and seas contribute not only to the good life our rakyat enjoys but also the world. And this experience may inspire this little Malaysian girl or boy to one day become a scientist, a conservationist, an environmental activist, or even just a good citizen who values the environment and passes this on to their

friends and family. How many species of plants and animals will they conserve? How many forests and rivers will they save or restore? How many more people will benefit from the results?

19. The best kind of gifts are those that keep on giving. The best good we can do in life is the kind that continues after we are gone. Let me quote to you a pantun and a saying: "*Pisang emas dibawa belayar/masak sebiji di atas peti/hutang emas boleh dibayar/hutang budi di bawa mati.*" But also: "*Kecil tapak tangan, nyiru ditadahkan.*"
  
20. I hope this town hall session will clarify what the Ministry is trying to do with the MBC and strengthen our collaboration to achieve this ambitious plan. [I would like to add that the Ministry is also working with MOF to provide tax exemptions for companies that are willing to come on board].

With that note, I urge you to join and '**BE PART OF THE PLAN**'.

The future is by us and for us. Thank you.