

**Keynote Address****COMMEMORATING THE 50<sup>TH</sup> FPDA ANNIVERSARY**

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**[SALUTATIONS]**

Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Firstly, a warm welcome to all the Ministers and representatives from Singapore, Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom who are joining us today virtually for this momentous celebration. I am pleased to also welcome the High Commissioners who are attending physically today in our hybrid setup to mark the Five Power Defence Arrangements' (FPDA) 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

2. Indeed, it truly is an honour for Malaysia to be able to host the FPDA Golden Jubilee celebrations today and congratulations to everyone who have made the past five decades of partnership a successful one.

Honourable Ministers,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

3. Looking back at our beginnings, it all began with the drawdown by the British Government in 1968 where, as newly independent countries, Malaysia and Singapore were in a nascent state of defence. Against the backdrop of ongoing armed conflicts in the region, with the Vietnam War, the communist insurgency in Malaya, the termination of the Anglo-Malaya Defence Arrangement (AMDA), and the withdrawal of troops from the east of Suez – the five nations; Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom; agreed to form the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA) sealed by a Joint Communique that was declared in April 1971

in London. Our five nations came together to embark on a journey united by our common purpose to contribute to the external defence of Malaysia and Singapore.

4. Our formation moved at a rapid pace – through the founding Communique, the five nations agreed to establish the Joint Consultative Council as a decision and guiding tool for the Arrangement. Just a few months after, the Headquarters Integrated Area Defence System (HQIADS) was formed in September 1971 to assume responsibility for the air defence of Malaysia and Singapore. By November, the FPDA became official through a collection of bilateral exchange of notes between partner nations ratifying the beginning of the arrangement. Having continued through the peak of the Cold War and the volatile situation in Southeast Asia back then, the FPDA is unique and I believe no other arrangement of this sort exists today, which is why preserving this partnership is extremely important to Malaysia.

5. Since then, the FPDA has grown leaps and bounds to emerge as the world's second-oldest military arrangement, and Malaysia is proud to be a part of it. Progressively, the Arrangement has expanded to include a permanent involvement of the Defence Ministers and Chiefs of Defence Forces in 1988. By the late 1990s, the catalyst to the FPDA's continued ability to contribute tremendously to the development of Malaysia and Singapore's national defence was when the 3<sup>rd</sup> FDMM agreed that the commanding role of HQIADS be transferred to the Air Commander of Malaysia and Singapore respectively.

6. HQIADS, the cornerstone of the FPDA, remains as the iconic display of cooperation between the five partner nations – operated by Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom; it plays a vital role in bridging and integrating the development of our defence capabilities through joint activities and exercises. I would like to commend Commander Harland and his predecessors for piloting this role magnificently over the past five decades.

7. Indeed, we have gone through a lot over the past 50 years, but the past two years have been one of most challenging times we have faced with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 has undoubtedly changed the global landscape, and it remains to be seen how defence and security considerations are brought into play.

Honourable Ministers,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

8. Our history plays a crucial factor in understanding the future, and as we reminisce our beginnings – our principle of '*progressing at a comfortable pace*' has proven itself with 50 years of achievements for the Arrangement. It has provided us with a solid foundation that contributed to the endurance of close partnership, trust, and commitment.

9. Indeed, the FPDA as a form of multilateral cooperation has made significant and remarkable progress which can be encapsulated in **three facets** :-

i. Firstly, a more inter-connected approach of activities and exercises in conventional war fighting as well as non-traditional domains such as terrorism, maritime security and HADR, has improved our collective armed forces' capacities, professionalism, and interoperability over time;

ii. Secondly, our activities have helped further develop and strengthen cooperation among partner-nations. The close defence ties we share between FPDA members have facilitated both military-to-military cooperation, as well as enhancing bilateral relations.

iii. Thirdly, the guidance provided by the ANZUK forces have helped improve the capabilities and professionalism of the Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF) and the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) since the inception of the FPDA.

10. In fact, as a collective of five nations – we have demonstrated that as partners, holding the largest annual multilateral exercises in the region, we are committed to collectively maintain peace and stability in the region inclusively. It is undeniable that the Arrangement acts as a stabilizing force within the region.

Honourable Ministers,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

11. Our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary today is an opportunity for us to reflect on our achievements and look ahead to what the future may bring. Our shared security interests and political commitments is testament to the FPDA's perseverance as a relevant and reliable multilateral defence framework. Our continued commitment to collaborate in conventional and non-conventional security domains is what keeps us in pace with the ever-evolving challenges in our region amid heightened global uncertainties.

12. Now, the FPDA is about to take another decade of an exciting journey to better respond to the complex regional security landscape. In this regard, the FPDA 50th Anniversary Stock-Take will guide this arrangement towards a greater level of friendship and cooperation.

13. The strategic direction entailed in the Stock-Take will allow the FPDA to embark on a new mission of high-end conventional warfighting through the introduction of 5th generation of assets, introduce information and cybersecurity progressively while preparing to enhance mission in counter-terrorism and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR), and finally improve Headquarters of Integrated Area Defence System (HQIADS) communication and tools to support the evolution of FPDA exercises. This will prepare the FPDA to be more resilient against emerging security challenges derived from the perpetual geopolitical dynamism, rapid technological advancements, and the ongoing pandemic.

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14. Underpinned by a solid foundation, it is my hope that the FPDA will continue to nurture relationships, enhance capacity, and reinforce interoperability in a strategic and constructive manner towards a more auspicious outlook for the region. Of course, the remit and mandate of the FPDA remains the same, which is to safeguard the external defence of Malaysia and Singapore. Looking ahead, we must not wish for such an occasion and we must chart an optimistic path forward with our prevailing spirit and enthusiasm placed at the center of all our efforts.

15. As an institution rooted in mutual trust and understanding, it is on us as a collective of five nations to determine what the next 50 years for the FPDA will bring. On Malaysia's part, we remain committed to the FPDA and it must continue as an integral part of the region's security architecture. Today marks an opportunity to transform our five-nation group and forge a new place in the post-pandemic world.

16. Coming together in 1971 was a beginning, working together for 50 years was a testament of growth, and moving together towards the future is undoubtedly our success.

17. In the spirit of *'Five Together'* to close, I would like to wish the entire FPDA community a *'Happy 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary'*. May the Almighty bless our future and whatever it may bring.

Thank you.