



**MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

**OPENING SPEECH**

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MINISTER OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

**FOR**

**ALAM BE-LEAF  
JOINT OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF RAKAN BUMI INITIATIVE FOR  
MANGROVE PLANTING PROGRAMME 2024 WITH KBS**

**12 MAY 2024 (SUNDAY)**

**MANGROVE POINT,  
KLANG**

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim

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Chairman, Amanah Lestari Alam (ALAM)

**YBhg. Datuk Dr. Ching Thoo a/l Kim**

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Group Chief Executive Officer, Bank Pembangunan Malaysia Berhad

**YBrs. Puan Wan Faizah Che Din**

Chief Executive Officer, Amanah Lestari Alam

Ladies and gentlemen,

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh, Salam Sejahtera, Salam Malaysia Madani and a very good morning to all.

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. I want to congratulate **Amanah Lestari Alam (ALAM)** for the effort they have put into organising **the ALAM Be-Leaf Mangrove Tree Planting Programme** at the **Mangrove Point, Klang** today. I am honoured to be here this morning to launch this very timely programme.

2. I was informed that more than **100 participants and volunteers** have joined us today. They come from government agencies, the private sector and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), as well as youth and university students from the International Islamic University Malaysia, Universiti Teknologi MARA, and UNITAR International University. Thank you all for being here, for giving up your Sunday morning to contribute to the cause of mangroves, the environment, climate action and in effect—humanity.

Ladies and gentlemen,

### **WHY MANGROVES MATTER**

3. Climate change is real and the impacts are already being felt in Malaysia. Rising temperatures and sea levels, as well as changing rainfall patterns, pose significant threats to our natural resources, ecosystems, and communities. The challenges posed by climate change and environmental degradation require collective effort and collaboration across all sectors of society.
4. One weapon, if you will, in our arsenal in this fight, is mangroves. Mangroves are not just havens for diverse wildlife; they are the silent guardians of our coastlines. Mangroves are champions of biodiversity, acting as nurseries for countless fish species that form the foundation of our marine food chain. They act as natural filters, purifying water by removing pollutants before they reach our shores. They also hold the soil in place, prevent erosion, and safeguard our coastal communities from powerful storms and rising sea levels – a threat that will become increasingly pronounced due to climate change.

5. Since 2005, the Government has taken significant steps to preserve and conserve mangrove areas through **the Tree Planting Programme with Mangroves and Suitable Species along National Coastlines**. These initiatives were put in place following the devastating tsunami tragedy on 26 December 2004. By the year 2023, an impressive **3,456.74 hectares** of coastal areas across the country have been restored with mangrove trees and selected coastal forest species. A staggering **7,938,531 trees** have been planted, contributing to the preservation and enhancement of these precious ecosystems.
  
6. In July 2023, **Leticia Carvalho**, Head of Marine and Freshwater at the **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)** was quoted as saying that: “Mangroves are a remarkably diverse and important ecosystem that works in tandem with other marine ecosystems including seagrass beds and coral reefs all of which are essential not only for the health of our ocean, coasts and the biodiversity that they support, but for the wellbeing of humans”. She also stressed that mangroves needed to be protected and restored as they are an important source of food supplies for many indigenous peoples and local communities worldwide.

Ladies and gentlemen,

## **THE ALAM BE-LEAF PROGRAMME**

7. It is clear therefore that our mangroves need to be protected at all costs. You only need to look around where we are now to realise how crucial, even beautiful they are.

8. Therefore, thank you and congratulations to ALAM for spearheading this initiative, which contributes significantly to the protection and management of mangroves in this area. The NRES Ministry welcomes your efforts.
9. The ALAM Be-Leaf Programme organised today is in line with the Greening Malaysia Programme through the 100 Million Tree-planting Campaign which is currently being implemented across the country.
10. This campaign aims to preserve, conserve, and increase the country's green coverage area. It also encourages the participation and involvement of all parties including the private sector and corporate bodies to jointly make the national greening agenda a success through financial contributions, sponsorships, and planting activities.

Ladies and gentlemen,

## **WHAT THE GOVERNMENT IS DOING**

11. On a wider scale, Malaysia has consistently upheld the commitment it made during the 1992 Rio Earth Summit to maintain at least 50 per cent of the country's land area under forests and tree cover. As of 2020, 54.58 per cent or 18.05 million hectares of land is still covered by forests.
12. As one of the 17 megadiverse countries, our forest resources and biodiversity need to be managed wisely. They are a crucial and, if lost, arguably irreplaceable part of our country's wealth, the patrimony of our people.

13. The NRES Ministry is committed to ensuring natural resources are protected, managed sustainably, and used responsibly. To date, **various initiatives at the national level** have been taken by NRES through the Forestry Department, such as:
  - a. As mentioned, implementing **the Greening Malaysia Program: 100 Million Tree Planting Campaign (2021 - 2025)** to increase forest conservation through tree planting activities;
  - b. enhancing efforts to preserve and restore degraded forested areas through the **Restoration, Reclaiming, and Rehabilitation of Degraded Forests Program** or **Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR)**;
  - c. implementing the **Tree Planting Programme with Mangroves and Suitable Species** along National Coastlines;
  - d. implementing the **Central Forest Spine (CFS)** and **Heart of Borneo (HoB)** initiatives; and
  - e. providing incentives through the **Ecological Fiscal Transfer for Biodiversity Conservation (EFT)** instrument for the states to make efforts to protect and embark on biodiversity conservation activities such as conserving watershed forest areas and protected areas as well as gazettelement of new protected areas.
  
14. NRES is committed to exploring and implementing all viable mitigation actions that can help the country achieve its goals.

This includes conservation and rehabilitation of our natural heritage including mangroves and coastal ecosystems that serve to protect our flora and fauna as well as marine ecosystems.

Ladies and gentlemen,

## **CIVIL SOCIETY'S CRUCIAL ROLE**

15. But of course, the federal government, while it can do a lot, also needs the support of all corners of our society when it comes to protecting mangroves or forests and the environment as a whole. I would like to express my gratitude for the unwavering support and dedication of numerous stakeholders, including state governments, NGOs, and local communities for this remarkable achievement. Currently, we have **13 NGOs** that are actively involved in this programme across the country.
16. The participation of NGOs, youths, and communities in this programme plays an important role in promoting and inspiring more active involvement from both the private sector and individuals, thus, bridging the gap between government and local communities towards safeguarding our precious mangroves and coastal ecosystems.
17. I understand that the ALAM Be-Leaf Programme involves various stakeholders working in collaboration with the **Ministry of Youth and Sports (KBS)** through **Rakan Muda (Rakan Bumi)** initiatives. This collaboration signifies the spirit of partnership in mainstreaming environmental conservation efforts.

18. I earnestly hope that the ALAM Be-Leaf Programme will further encourage youth volunteerism and participation in conserving and preserving our natural treasures. I am especially pleased to see young people in the crowd, for choosing to here and participating, to act to help, in a seemingly modest but very important way, preserve the future—for us all. Thank you for your passion and your commitment. We will and are doing our best not to let you down.

Ladies and gentlemen,

## **CONCLUSION**

19. Let me end by again congratulating everyone who was involved in the ALAM Be-Leaf Programme and today's Mangrove Planting event. My thanks again also to the organisations and individuals who have supported its realisation.
20. In a way, planting a tree is an act of hope. You do it because you believe it will grow. It is also, really, an act of love, because you also believe that tree will continue long after you have left this world and will keep giving to the generations to come. Today, as we embark on this journey of planting mangroves, let's remember – a single seed, nurtured with care, has the potential to grow into a mighty force for good. Let us plant the seeds of change together and build a more sustainable future for our nation.
21. With that, I hereby officiate the ALAM Be-Leaf Programme 2024.

Wabillahi taufik walhidayah, wassalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh. Thank you.