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**MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND
ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

SPEECH

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MINISTER OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND
ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

**FOR
ANNUAL LUNCHEON
MALAYSIAN CHAMBER OF MINES**

28 MAY 2024 (TUESDAY)

**SHERATON IMPERIAL HOTEL,
KUALA LUMPUR**

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim

*Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh and Salam Malaysia
Madani*

YBhg. Dato' Seri Mohd Ajib bin Anuar,
President, Malaysian Chamber of Mines,

YBhg. Datuk Dr Ching Thoo a/l Kim,
Secretary General, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental
Sustainability,

YBhg. Datuk Zamri bin Ramli
Director General, Department of Minerals and Geosciences

Members of the Malaysian Chamber of Mines,

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

INTRODUCTION

1. Let me begin by thanking the Malaysian Chamber of Mines, for inviting my colleagues from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability (NRES) and I to the Chamber's 2024 Annual Luncheon, held in conjunction with your 113th AGM.

2. I am honoured to be again present at this Annual Luncheon, this time as the Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability. As the apex body championing the national mineral resource industry's interests in the country, the Chamber and its members have played a pivotal role in ensuring that the mineral resource industry continues to remain a significant contributor to the nation's economy.
3. It is my understanding that at the Chamber's 113th AGM held earlier today, YBhg. Dato' Seri Mohd Ajib Anuar and YBhg. Dato' Sri Ahmad Omar were unanimously re-elected as the Chamber's President and Vice-President, respectively. Our heartiest congratulations to both of you. The re-election of both Dato' Seri Mohd Ajib and Dato' Sri Ahmad, as a team reflects the full confidence placed on them by the Chamber members in their ability to provide strong leadership, with the vision of advancing the industry ahead. Congratulations also to the newly elected members of the Chamber Council for the 2024/2025 term.
4. Again, I am confident that the newly re-elected President and Vice-President, together with the newly re-appointed Chamber Council members, will be able to perform their functions and fulfil their responsibilities to lead the Chamber in protecting, promoting, and advancing the general interest of the mineral resource community in Malaysia.
5. On our part, the Ministry is always eager to work with the Chamber, particularly in pursuing the agenda of responsible and sustainable mineral resource development.

Ladies and gentlemen,

BRINGING BACK THE MINING INDUSTRY'S GLORY DAYS

6. Listening to your President's Welcome Address earlier, I do agree that a lot more needs to be done to revitalise the mineral industry to bring it back to the days when tin mining was one of the twin pillars of the nation's economy. The discovery and mining of ion adsorption clay type rare earths or NR-REE resources, has given us new hope that this may be possible if we do things right. The SOP for the mining of NR-REE had been approved by the Cabinet last year and is ready for implementation.

7. Also, thank you to Dato' Seri Ajib and the Chamber for highlighting the hindrances or impediments to mineral resource development and more importantly, proposing how these issues can and should be addressed. The Ministry is very appreciative of feedback from the industry and will certainly take note and do our best to resolve the issues.

8. The discovery of rare earths resources in our country has also made us more aware of the importance of minerals in our daily life, especially those minerals from which critical technology metals are produced. The rapid shift to greener and renewable energy to address climate change, together with the expansion of digital technologies, require the extraction, processing and production of critical technology metals, such as tin, rare earths, copper, lithium, nickel, cobalt and gallium which are needed for the manufacture of devices and equipment, batteries, and electric vehicles.

9. Kudos to the Malaysian Chamber of Mines and its members, as well as industry experts and professionals, scholars from higher institutions, and others, who had worked hard to enlighten our society on the contribution and importance of this industry to society, starting from food security to its importance in sustainable development.

10. Malaysia is lucky indeed to be well endowed with an abundance of mineral resources, particularly those which are sources for the production of critical technology metals such as tin and rare earths. The Ministry is always eager to see a thriving and prosperous local mineral resource industry, which is able to contribute to the development of our nation, while fulfilling the Ministry's agenda to develop our mineral resources in a sustainable and responsible manner. The need for this is all the more important when we consider the geopolitical tensions and continued disruption of global supply chains - which is both a challenge and an opportunity for nations like ours.

11. Be that as it may, the Chamber, mining industry players and the Government sector, still have a long and challenging journey ahead, as public perception that mining industry is a hazardous, destructive and corrupt business still persists. Besides the issues of illegal mining and pollution, the mining industry had to confront governance and enforcement issues.

12. As we are all aware, the National Mineral Policy 3 framework has already been approved by the Cabinet this year. It has set a clear policy statement that the mineral industry would be an important contributor to the national economy and the well-being of the people through the development of the entire value chain in a responsible and sustainable manner.
13. The Ministry is also drafting action plans for the implementation of the policy and will hold engagement sessions with various parties so that this policy is inclusive and takes the views of all stakeholders. The Ministry is also looking into the best way possible to set up the Mineral Industry Development Board. With the setting up of the Mineral Board, the Malaysian mineral industry as a whole will be better organised and managed, which will in turn benefit all stakeholders in the mineral sector.
14. The Ministry has also taken the initiative to introduce sustainable green mining practices which will go a long way towards enhancing the standing and perception of the mineral resource industry in Malaysia. We certainly appreciate the Chamber's support in this initiative. I believe strong support from the Chamber is important to the success of any initiative related to sustainable green mining practices.

Ladies and gentlemen,

15. One issue still before us is the potentially huge amount of economic mineral resources which, according to geological experts, still exists undiscovered in permanent reserved forests and environmentally sensitive areas. On the one hand, we are obligated to preserve and protect a certain percentage of our land under forest cover, while on the other, we need to make use of our natural resources to help sustain the economic well-being of the nation which is in need of new additional sources of revenue.

16. In this respect, I was also informed that the Chamber, in collaboration with the Tin Industry (Research and Development) Board is conducting a science and economic-based study on the net return on value and justifications to allow sustainable and responsible mining to take place in permanent reserved forests and environmentally sensitive areas.

17. At the same time, the Ministry through the Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) is also carrying out a study on the impact of NR-REE mining in Permanent Forest Reserves. The outcome of these studies will be helpful to the Ministry in making decisions on our existing policies in not allowing mining activities to take place in sensitive and protected areas.

18. In terms of stimulating trade and investment into the local mineral resource industry, the Ministry is of the view that a cross-ministerial cooperation is needed, particularly with the Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Science and Technology or MOSTI, and

Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry or MITI. Nevertheless, NRES is determined to play our part in facilitating trade and investment for the local mineral resource industry.

19. Public-private sector collaboration is important in promoting mineral resource development, which is high risk and capital intensive. Whilst the Government can only afford the reconnaissance surveys to identify areas of potential, funds from the private sector are needed to undertake the follow-up, detailed and feasibility surveys to allow informed decisions to be made before proceeding to mine. Hence, we will need private sector investors with an appetite for risk taking.

20. Because of geopolitical uncertainties as well as ever-changing technology and growing consciousness on the need for sustainability, there will be challenging times ahead for the industry, like most. But these will also be times of great opportunity, not least to move our industries into the future. We must not shy away from it, but rather embrace it while closing ranks. The future is sustainable and it is ours to win if we can ride this wave.

Ladies and gentlemen,

CLOSING

21. At this juncture, I would like to record my sincere appreciation to the Chamber and its members, for your cooperation, support and participation in the numerous programmes and activities undertaken by the Ministry and JMG throughout all these years, and your contributions towards the progress of our nation.
22. It is my hope that our local mineral resources would thrive in a responsible and sustainable manner, thus contributing to our country in the form of revenue generation, improved quality of life, society well-being, development of our human capital and advancement in science and technology.
23. I wish you all every success in efforts in advancing the interest of the mineral resource industry, which in turn would benefit our nation and society, particularly our future generations. Thank you.

Wabillahi Taufik Walhidayah, Wassalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh.