



SPEECH TEXT

**YB DATO' SRI HAJAH NANCY BINTI SHUKRI
MINISTER OF WOMEN, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

**PROGRAM
OFFICIAL LAUNCHING OF THE WORLD
COUNSELLING CONFERENCE 2025**

**LOCATION / DATE / TIME
UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA, SERDANG
25 FEBRUARY 2025 (TUESDAY)
11.30AM**

Updated 24 February 2025

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

(SALUTASI)

SALUTATIONS TO BE ATTACHED

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh,

1. Alhamdulillah, it is truly an honour to be here today to launch the **World Counseling Conference 2025**. This event is proudly organised by the Board of Counsellors Malaysian under the Ministry of Women, Family, and Community Development, together with Universiti Putra Malaysia, Open University Malaysia, Universiti Malaya, National University of Malaysia, and Sunway University.

2. Over the three days, I believe you will learn a lot from top counselling experts from Malaysia, the United States, Finland, and beyond. To our international guests, *selamat datang*—welcome to Malaysia! I hope you have an inspiring and enjoyable time here in our country.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

3. Counselling services in Malaysia have significantly progressed since the introduction of the Counselor Act 1998 (Act 580), ensuring our counsellors maintain the highest standards of professionalism and ethics.

4. Globally, the COVID-19 pandemic deeply impacted mental health, resulting in increased cases of anxiety, depression, and PTSD, as highlighted by the CDC and WHO.
5. While the pandemic has largely subsided, many continue to face lingering issues such as loneliness and economic hardship. Yet, it has also driven a global shift towards greater awareness and openness regarding mental health care.

6. Social media influencers and prominent public figures have played critical roles in combating mental health stigma. Organizations such as the American Psychological Association (APA) and the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) of the United States of America have been essential in encouraging individuals to seek professional help.

7. Today, counselling and psychotherapy are broadly recognized as essential services for maintaining emotional health and well-being in our rapidly evolving world.
8. The advancement of technology, particularly through the Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR 4.0), has introduced digital and telehealth services, making mental health support increasingly accessible to everyone, regardless of their background.

MENTAL HEALTH TRENDS IN MALAYSIA

9. Malaysia is currently experiencing a rise in mental health issues. The National Health & Morbidity Survey (NHMS) 2023 revealed nearly one million Malaysians aged 16 and above suffer from depression, doubling since 2019, with many considering self-harm or believing they would be better off dead.

10. Additionally, 1 in 5 young Malaysians struggle with mental health challenges like emotional disorders, hyperactivity, and peer pressure, underscoring the critical need for timely interventions.
11. The theme of this conference, “**New Horizons in Counseling Practices: Navigating Social, Psychological, and Technological Challenges,**” speaks directly to these growing concerns.

12. With rapid technological advancement, counselling professionals must adapt effectively to address emerging challenges in career guidance, mental health care, family support, and rehabilitation.
13. Despite increased acceptance, stigma and fear of judgement continue to discourage people from seeking counselling, as noted by the American Psychological Association (APA).

Ladies & Gentlemen,

14. Global crises, including wars and natural disasters, continue to profoundly impact mental health. According to the UNHCR, over 21 million people have been displaced due to climate-related disasters.
15. Without immediate action, climate change could force over 215 million people to migrate by 2050, especially in regions like Sub-Saharan Africa, East Asia, South Asia, and Latin America.

16. Such global developments have increased migration, creating diverse communities that require culturally sensitive counselling practices. For instance, the conflict in Sudan has displaced millions, further highlighting the necessity of culturally competent counselling approaches.

17. Recognizing this, the National Board for Certified Counselors emphasizes cultural sensitivity, ensuring counselling services respect and understand diverse cultural backgrounds.
18. Modern counselling now increasingly takes place online via tele-counselling or e-counselling, demanding updated ethical guidelines and professional standards.

19. In response, organisations such as the American Counseling Association and the Board of Counsellors Malaysia have revised ethical guidelines to integrate technology effectively into counselling services.
20. Although e-counselling presents challenges, such as limited nonverbal communication, it remains essential for individuals facing geographical, financial, or health barriers.

21. Effective e-counselling relies on professional training and strong communication skills between counsellors and clients.
22. Career counselling, particularly relating to Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), has become increasingly important in the post-pandemic world, where job markets and skill demands have significantly changed.

23. Supporting students with modern digital career counselling tools is vital for their future success. Clearly, these challenges highlight the importance of continually enhancing and innovating counselling practices to meet society's evolving needs.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

24. On behalf of the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, I congratulate and sincerely thank everyone involved in making this conference a success. This event represents an important step forward in developing counselling services that meet contemporary needs.

25. It is with great pleasure that I officially declare the World Counselling Conference 2025 open. I wish you all an insightful and enriching experience.

Thank you.

Wabillahi taufiq walhidayah

Wassalamualaikum warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh.

YB DATO' SRI HAJAH NANCY BINTI SHUKRI
Minister of Women, Family & Community Development
25 February 2025