

SPEECH BY
YANG AMAT BERHORMAT
DATUK PATINGGI TAN SRI (DR) ABANG HAJI ABDUL
RAHMAN ZOHARI BIN TUN DATUK ABANG HAJI OPENG
THE PREMIER OF SARAWAK
IN CONJUNCTION WITH
THE LAUNCH OF GAWAI ANTU DOCUMENTARY

BORNEO CULTURES MUSEUM KUCHING AUDITORIUM,
20TH SEPTEMBER 2022
AT 10.30 AM

[Salutation and Greetings]

1. Pertama sekali saya ingin mengucapkan terima kasih terutama kepada YBhg Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Alfred Jabu dan YBhg. Tan Sri Dato Sri Empiang Jabu atas jemputan untuk melancarkan filem dokumentari mengenai Perayaan Gawai Antu, iaitu sebuah perayaan yang begitu penting dalam tradisi dan kepercayaan masyarakat Iban.

2. Syabas dan tahniah kepada keluarga Datuk Patinggi Jabu yang telah mendokumentasikan perayaan tersebut berdasarkan perayaan yang telah diadakan di Rumah Panjang Datuk Patinggi Jabu di Gensurai, Layar, Betong dalam format resolusi yang tinggi untuk simpanan dalam arkib.

3. This documentary serves to refresh my memory with an unforgettable experience when my wife, Datin Patinggi Puan Sri Datuk Amar Hajah Juma'ani and I were invited to the Gawai Antu at Gensurai Layar longhouse in Betong on 22nd December 2018. I can remember vividly that there was a large and joyous crowd of a few thousand people attending the ceremony.

4. This documentary is an exemplary effort by Datuk Patinggi Jabu and his family to document the celebration in order to preserve it in a medium that can be viewed by the younger generations of the Iban community and others outside the community.

5. This is a tremendous effort that should be emulated by our various ethnic communities in Sarawak to seriously preserve their cultural heritage by recording them and storing them

digitally that be retrieved for viewing and for various other purposes by the future generations.

6. I was given to understand by Datuk Patinggi Jabu that the Ibans hold the unique Gawai Antu to accord the highest form of respect, appreciation and honour by the living relatives for the good deeds which their forefathers, relatives or ancestors who had endeavoured hard during their to ensure a good and decent life for those after them. I was told that the preparation for such an event is steep in rituals according to the Iban belief system that may differ from place to place.

7. But what struck me deeply was that the celebration as I saw it happened was that the merriment has been an effective platform for intra and inter-cultural interactions as Iban communities from other longhouses and places, including from overseas, joined in the celebration while others from other communities also came around as friends to appreciate this unique aspect of the Iban community.

Ladies and gentlemen,

8. The documentary has also provided through the multimedia an important medium to showcase Sarawak's diverse socio-cultural aspects to be shared and appreciated by people beyond the shores of Sarawak.

9. This unique celebration of the Iban community is an important linkage for Sarawak to the outside world, and for that matter, indigenous festivals of many ethnic groups from Sarawak provide important avenues for cultural education for our friends from overseas.

10. The official launching of this morning's screening of the documentary is probably the first of such initiatives by Borneo Cultures Museum to share with the general public and the world at large this beautiful aspect of the Iban community's culture.

11. I understand that following this official launch there will be one or two occasions for screening as permitted by Borneo Cultures Museum to share the uniqueness of this rare festival with the wider audience and cultural enthusiasts.

12. The whole longhouse and the people at Gensurai Layar, Betong ought to be congratulated for successfully organising the

celebration which is now fully documented and preserved on high quality digital format.

13. Sekali lagi saya ingin mengucapkan tahniah kepada Datuk Patinggi Alfred dan keluarga beliau yang telah menjayakan dokumentari ini.

Sekian. Terima kasih.

