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*Malaysian*  
**Protocol**



*Correct Forms of Address*

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*Third Edition*

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## Protocol and the Businessman

### Protocoligorically Correct

My granddaughter, Afzan, loves to sing a song called 'Protocoligorically Correct' which she learned from the video musical *The Slipper and the Rose*. It really is the story of Cinderella and the song is from a scene which shows the King and his counsellors preparing for a ball. The song is sung by the King with all his lords joining in on the chorus, which goes something like this:

*Yes, we must be protocoligorically correct.*

*Good form must never suffer from neglect.*

*Rules and regulations we respect,*

*Must be treated with circumspect*

*Else the kingdom will be wrecked.*

*Checked and double-checked,*

*And protocoligorically correct.*

It is an intensely funny scene with the King and counsellors singing and romping to the music and using the words 'respect' and 'circumspect' with a great deal of sarcasm. Still, sarcasm or not, the underlying message of this seemingly harmless banter is this: sit *one* person wrong – we declare war.

But why am I telling this story? Just to show that to most people, protocol is a funny thing. Something to laugh at. Nobody takes it seriously. Mention 'protocol' and the general reaction is 'keep away from

protocol; I don't want to have anything to do with it'. Even President Truman of the United States was heard to have said, "Protocol and striped pants give me a pain in the neck."

This is the attitude taken by most people, including some corporate executives. It is a wrong attitude to take. Protocol *is* very important and should be taken seriously. Many people will say, "Oh, I don't much care about protocol. I'm an easy person." But deep inside, most people do. Everyone wants to be recognised. The higher he or she gets, his or her station needs to be recognised. There is also the clever adage which states:

"Those that care do not matter and those that matter do not care."

A very clever, but dangerous maxim to go by. Because those that matter do care and those that care do matter. If you are a good host, everyone that you invite matters. This is especially so in this country with all the titles and ranks: the Tunkus and Ungkus, the Tuns and Tan Sri's, the Dato' Seri's and Dato's. Not to mention the Ambassadors, Generals, Admirals, Commissioners and Superintendents, Chairmen and Managing Directors, etc. and etc.

All these people know their station in life and expect to be accordingly treated. Because of this, responsible people in this country should take more interest in protocol. I have known parties given with the best intentions, but ended with the most disastrous results. Why? Because people disregarded protocol. As a result, those invited were not seated properly and became upset. A businessman cannot afford this. All that time, energy and money spent will come to nought and on occasion even have adverse effect.

## **How Protocol Began**

If we want to be serious about protocol, we must know what it is all about. The word 'protocol' started with the Greeks. It is a combination of two Greek words: 'protos' meaning first or premier and 'kolla' meaning glued-in, as to a book; as a summary or digest of the contents.

Thus, strictly speaking, protocol was originally concerned with documents. This gradually embraced the concept of something which was added to a treaty in order to perfect or complete a treaty. By extension, it came to mean the technique or the proper method of doing things, including official etiquette, i.e., all forms of understanding between