

## Setting the tone for the future

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*Translation of the speech by Deputy UMNO President, Datuk Seri Mohd Najib Tun Abdul Razak at the opening of the Wanita, Youth and Puteri UMNO General Assembly 2006 at PWTC, Kuala Lumpur on Nov. 13, 2006.*

PRAISE be to Allah for his benevolence in permitting us to come together in this historic hall. This year Wanita delegates represent 1.3 million members from across the nation, while Pemuda delegates represent 730,000 members and Puteri delegates represent 280,000 members.

The reality is that all of us here, whether we are on this stage or in the audience, are leaders. Leaders at various levels; leaders new and old; leaders from among professionals and those with years of experience. We are here with one determination and one struggle, in the name of religion race and nation. Indeed at this moment, all of us here carry with us the voices of more than 3.2 million members of Umno, whilst in a larger context, 16 million Malays are placing their hopes on us.

In the same vein, the people have given a huge mandate to Umno and Barisan Nasional to lead this country. That is the great trust that we must uphold, it is an enormous responsibility that we must bear, and such is the high hopes and aspirations of the rakyat that has been placed upon us.

### **Wanita, Pemuda and Puteri**

First of all allow me to congratulate the Wanita, Pemuda and Puteri wings for successfully discharging their responsibilities in convening their respective branch and divisional meetings. I wish to also say “well done” to the three party wings for all their energy and effort in ensuring our success in the Pengkalan Pasir by-election in Kelantan and the Sarawak state elections recently. It is clear that every single time the need arose the three wings rose to the occasion and ensured the victory of Umno and Barisan Nasional.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Wanita Umno continues to be the lynchpin of the party’s stability with its complete and unwavering support. Wanita members are ever diligent in carrying out various programmes at the grass-roots level, and they are ever tirelessly working for Umno, sometimes making great sacrifices for the benefit of the party. Indeed, the presence of Wanita members in every branch and divisional meeting and in every party programme inspires and encourages us to carry on our struggle.

Pemuda meanwhile, continues valiantly in providing assistance to those in need both within and beyond our borders. With courage and conviction, the Pemuda wing strongly criticizes the injustices of global powers and the atrocities of the Zionist regime that continues to be the cause of instability in the Middle East. Simultaneously, we are full of confidence that Pemuda Umno will unfailingly serve as our first line of defence against any attacks on the Malay Agenda.

We would like to see Puteri Umno getting the full support from leaders at all levels. Puteri, with the variety of programmes, campaigns, seminars and courses that it organises, is active both in cities and in villages. What is abundantly clear, is that Puteri, as well as Putera, as the embodiment of the rejuvenation of the party, must be the main platform through which youths can embrace Umno.

Wanita Pemuda and Puteri must perpetually strive to represent the true voice of the Malays. Ignite the passion for the cause through activities that would bring as much benefit as possible to as many people as possible. Let us not easily tire (or as they say in Kepala Batas “Cemuih”, or “Mamoi” as the Pekan dialect) of participating in those activities. In the same token, let us not allow our youth to fall into disarray.

Instead, we must work towards ensuring that all of us are able to move forward as one united force.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Last year, I enumerated several steps that we must take in the creation of Glocal Malays. Glocal Malays, are Malays whose roots are firmly entrenched locally whilst their minds are of global calibre. It simply means that if one is excellent in one's country, one must be equally excellent internationally. The five steps I spoke of in creating the Glocal Malay encompasses the enhancement of knowledge and education, the fostering of a robust economy for continuous development, the understanding of religion, the strengthening of identity through cultural transformation and the fortification of politics on the strength of our ideals.

In point of fact, the Glocal Malays of which I spoke are already in existence. To cite an example, in 1997, 15 Malay Petronas engineers were sent to Switzerland to gain experience as they worked for Sauber, a company famous in the Formula One motor racing arena. In the span of just one year, these engineers were able to successfully create a prototype engine tested with Lotus. Subsequently, they were able to produce commercial engines.

The most recent development with regards to this achievement is that the engine that these young people developed will soon be produced on a commercial scale, now that Petronas has inked a deal with an automotive company in China. These excellent young engineers I spoke of are no different from the rest of you.

Just like you, they are also from areas like Batu Pahat, Kota Tinggi, Rembau, Balik Pulau, Paka, Pasir Mas, Sandakan, Kuala Krai, Sg.Petani dan Mentakab. Today, these young engineers are about to make their presence felt on the global stage. This is a fine example of Glocal Malays. This is the Glocal Malay that we wish to see more of. This is the manifestation of quality human capital with a 'first class mentality'.

## **The 9th Malaysia Plan**

Ladies and gentlemen,

On March 31st 2006, the Prime Minister unveiled the 9th Malaysia Plan, with a RM220 Billion allocation. This five year comprehensive plan outlines various policies and strategies towards the realization of the National Mission. This Mission puts forth five thrusts which are to move the economy up the value chain; to raise the country's capacity for knowledge, creativity and innovation and nurturing a 'first class mentality'; to address persistent socio-economic inequalities constructively and productively; to improve the standard and sustainability of our quality of life; and to strengthen the institutional and implementation capacity of the country.

This great mission takes into consideration the larger interest of all Malaysians, so that no one is kept away from the mainstream of the country's development. The strategic planning presented by the Prime Minister is clearly designed to uplift the status of the rakyat.

Within the 9th Malaysia Plan, the continuity of the Malay agenda is evident. It is neither an illusion nor fantasy. Instead it takes the form of a comprehensive plan of implementation encompassing education, the mastery of science and technology, entrepreneurial development, hi-tech agriculture, poverty eradication, narrowing the income gap, and the reduction of territorial development gaps. Therefore, let us all unite as one powerful force under the leadership of YAB Dato Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to ensure that this mission becomes a reality.

## **Malaysia in Five Decades**

Next year, Malaysia will be celebrating its golden jubilee as an independent nation. If we were to think in terms of age, 50 can be regarded as the age of maturity. This 50-year period of freedom from the shackles of colonisation seems to have passed so quickly. On reflection, the people of fifty years ago would not have been able to imagine the achievements we have made today. In fact, many people back then were rather sceptical about the future of an independent Malaya.

Be that as it may, the last five decades of our history showcase millions of important milestones as Malaysia rose in prominence on the world stage. The

secret of our success lies in the strength of our leadership, which is full of wisdom and has often been ahead of its time. It cannot be denied that the success we enjoy today did not come about by sheer coincidence. Instead, the sum of it all is the result of careful planning and strategizing by all of our leaders.

As an example, in politics, we have chosen power sharing and inclusiveness as a mode of government. In the social sphere, we chose integration instead of assimilation. This is the kind of approach that is testimony of the wisdom and excellence of our leadership. In a world mired in the rise of extremism, violence and ideological conflicts, Malaysia shines as positive proof that harmony can still be attained even in a community of diverse races, religions and culture.

### **The International Scenario**

One needs only to look at the International scene to see the conflicts raging in countries around the world. In the Middle East especially, certain powers continue to push their mischievous agenda in blatantly allowing the illegal invasion of sovereign nations. They openly violate human rights in the name of the so-called "War against Terror". Whatever justification they may put forth in defence of the war they wage, it is generally acknowledged that such justification is nothing more than excuses and lies. In their countries even their own people have lost confidence in their leaders and they have given a clear signal of this through the ballot box. In the United States, a significant change is now taking place in the political landscape, as a direct result of the public outrage over the problems in Iraq.

The point is, if these powers are truly sincere in ending violence and fostering greater justice on earth, then they must address the legitimate grievances that give rise to the conflicts. In fact, in all conflicts, be it in Palestine, southern Thailand, or Southern Philippines addressing legitimate grievances is essential in resolving issues. In South Thailand for example, among the main problems is the demand of the local population for the freedom to practice an Islamic lifestyle, as well as the dissatisfaction over lack of economic development. In Palestine, the real issue is the unlawful occupation of their land by the Israelis since 1948 thereby denying the Palestinians the basic right to a sovereign nation.

The situation in West Asia is that the big powers continue to act as raucous international bullies who have little regard for the opinion of the rest of the world. With typical arrogance they act on the creed of "Might is Right" and on the misguided principle of "Act first, ask questions later", all in the name of their own interests. This is the problem when mankind chooses the path of war, of enmity and the abandonment of peace. These are lessons for us to take and learn from. We must always react rationally to anything that confronts us, and we must do so with sound global comprehension and never on the basis of sentiment and emotions alone.

And so we must always cherish and appreciate our progress and our unity as invaluable assets. Recently, John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister of Britain during his official visit here, expressed his country's admiration for our achievements in fighting extremism and preserving peace. According to him, Britain is looking to Malaysia as a model for the effective management of a multi-cultural, multi-racial society. Such is the international recognition of our success, to the extent that the nation which once colonised us, is now looking to learn from us in finding solutions the problems in their own country.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Fairness and tolerance have always been practiced in this country. In our effort to improve the socio-economic position of the Malays and the Bumiputera, the position of the Chinese community is never neglected. Statistics show that the average monthly household income of the Chinese community rose from RM796 in 1976 to RM4,437 in 2004.

The Bumiputera meanwhile saw their average monthly household income rise from RM339 to only RM2,711 during the same period.

Just on that fact alone, the allegation of Lee Kwan Yew that the Chinese community in Malaysia is sidelined is completely rejected. Let it never be said that our openness and inclusiveness is a sign of weakness. On the contrary it is precisely these qualities that make up the formula of our success. This is the approach that is well accepted by all races, all of who have been very willing to work hand in hand to develop Malaysia.

### **Strengthening The Malays**

Ladies and gentlemen,

On the back of the stability and harmony of this great nation, Umno continues its effort to strengthen the Malays. We cannot be satisfied with what we have accomplished so far, simply because that success is still not complete. Our initial objective was to create as many Malays as possible in the various professional fields. Unfortunately, the numbers are still not satisfactory and we haven't got the "critical mass" that we were aiming for. We must do everything we can to ensure that our objectives are met, whilst at the same time, we are also aiming to see Malays go even further.

In other words, it is no longer enough to have basic degrees, rather, we want to see thousands more Malay lawyers, doctors, accountants, architects and engineers who possess the highest qualifications in such strategic fields, which is to say that they must become accredited experts in their respective professions. It is not enough to become normal doctors Malays must become specialists. It is no longer enough to have accounting degrees, Malays must become certified

Chartered Accountants. No longer should Malays aim to become mere engineers, they must aim for doctorates in new fields like nano-technology.

Young Malays today have been tested in terms of physical abilities, and they are starting to show remarkable capabilities in areas that are challenging to the mind. Apart from the achievements of the Petronas engineers of whom I spoke earlier, we also have 17 Malay engineers who are involved in the micro-satellite project named Razak-Sat. They too are ordinary young Malays from the villages of Kg. Lahar Ikan Mati, Kepala Batas, Penang; Kg Gelong Bilal, Pasir Panjang, Kuala Terengganu; Kg. Lancuk Emat, Pokok Sena, Kedah; and Kg. Tengah Batu Kikir, Negeri Sembilan.

Other success stories include the accreditation of a group of Royal Malaysian Navy Personnel in France for submarine operations, and the upcoming success of our astronaut candidates Dr Sheikh Muszaphar Shukor and Capt Dr Faiz Khaleed. All these will be recorded in history as Umno's significant achievement in fostering Malays of dignity and respect.

As a testimony of the vertical social mobility that we have created, many of the Malays who are now charting success across the globe are from children of farmers, rubber tappers, fishermen, land scheme settlers, labourers and general workers. They have had their lives transformed and their living standards raised through the effective education system put in place by the Umno-led government. This is a fine example of how the struggle of Umno has had a great impact and produced results of which we can all be proud.

If previously there have been those who cynically remarked that we cannot even produce a needle, today we have clearly proven otherwise with the success of the Malays, from operating submarines in the deepest ocean, to mastering various skills and technology on land, to exploring new frontiers in space. Praise be to Allah, for this is His blessing, this is His mercy, and this is His bounty that he has poured unto us. No person can deny, that the Party that has enabled all of this to happen is none other than Umno, the party that belongs to us all.

### **Six Decades of Leadership Excellence**

This year, Umno mark its 60th year. The six decades that have gone by bear witness to the contributions, service, dedication and sacrifices of the leaders and the members of Umno. They have put in place a concrete foundation, not just for the party but also for the nation. It is from this solid foundation that Umno has moved progressively forward, step-by-step.

Looking back, we have been most fortunate to be bestowed with appropriate leaders throughout our history. Within half a century, each of our leaders have carefully and successfully mapped out strategies and formulated policies to re-organize society, to distribute wealth with equity and to eradicate poverty. YAB

Dato Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, leading Malaysia towards its primary aspiration of becoming a developed nation, now continues this tradition of fine leadership.

Along with our successes, Malaysian women too have charted remarkable progress. Clear examples lie in the fact that women occupy important positions namely, the Chief of Traffic at Bukit Aman, Chairman of the Securities Commission, vice-chancellors of two universities, the Chief Justice of Malaya, the Governor of the Central Bank, Secretary Generals of various ministries, numerous top positions in the civil service and in the corporate sector and also Cabinet Ministers. This is evidence that the move to have 30% of decision makers in the public and private sectors to be made up of women is becoming a reality.

As inheritors of success, we have no choice but to continue with the struggles of Umno. At this juncture on our journey, I feel it is pertinent for us to ask ourselves, will our party continue to be respected? Will we not, as members of Umno, have to respect ourselves, before expecting others to respect us?

The answer is that all of us, whatever position we may or may not hold in the party, bear the responsibility of protecting the good name of Umno and ensuring that Umno is always highly regarded. This must be the cornerstone of our struggle. Umno and Barisan Nasional have been at the helm of this nation continuously over five decades, and this is a world record in the history of politics. This is something we must appreciate and must continue to protect and uphold this achievement in the name of our continuing struggle for the Malays and for the people of Malaysia.

### **The Battle of The Future Is The Battle Of The Mind**

Ladies and gentlemen,

In Surah Al Anfalverse 60 of the Holy Quran, God enjoins mankind to make all necessary preparations to prepare for battle against one's enemies. Whereas in one hadith, the Prophet (P.B.U.H) said that "A Mukmin who is strong is better than a Mukmin who is weak. By way of contemporary interpretation, the two authorities clearly tells us to always be prepared for whatever challenges we must face.

There are numerous verses in the Quran that ask mankind to use his mind to interpret the wonders of nature. This is proof of the importance of the mind as a miracle of God's creation, which we must use completely and wholly in determining the direction of our lives and in any and all fields and disciplines. If once upon a time strength was measured in terms of physical quantity such as the number of soldiers, the amount of natural resources or the size of land one owns, today, the more important measure of strength is mental ability.

Mental ability will allow us to survey, assess and comprehend various problems more intellectually, rationally and strategically. Scholars have long said that we must think with the right method of thinking in order to achieve something. Therefore, the Malay mind must be sharpened and trained to think appropriately and to avoid conflicts, to embrace harmony and to produce excellence. Only with the right mindset can we face this ever-challenging world.

Ladies and gentlemen,

When we speak of the mind, essentially we speak of the brain, which is made up of the left and right hemispheres, and which also contains billions of neurons that can interact like a network of computers. A popular myth is that a person is born with a certain mental capacity that cannot be changed. The scientific fact however, is that the brain is an organ that can develop continuously. Its ability and sharpness can be continuously enhanced by way of appropriate training, education and nourishment.

From a healthy brain, there will emerge a sharp mind that is the key to success. An old Chinese proverb says that what moves the body is not the legs but the mind. We must use optimum mental capacity to compete on the global stage. Indeed the battle of today and of the future is the battle of the mind. The mind will not improve naturally on its own. Thus, the Malay mind must be driven towards that end. It must be sharpened by way of education, training and practice in methods of positive thinking, lateral thinking, pro-active thinking, and purity of thought. Therefore we must accelerate the Malay mind through transformational leadership, through teamwork, through the Malay agenda, by protecting the Akidah, and ultimately, we must drive the younger generation towards the same objectives.

### **First: Accelerating the Malay Mind through Transform-ational Leadership**

Throughout history, good leadership has been at the core of every civilization. At the apex of the various forms of leadership is Transformational Leadership, which is what we must aspire for. Transformational Leadership is the ability of a leader to translate his mission and vision in a way that can be embraced by all his followers.

It is in fact a form of leadership that will bring about wide scale tangible and visible improvements to a society to the extent that the society is transformed according to the mission and vision of the leader. A prime example of this is the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad who accelerated the mind of the people he led and transformed the pagan Arabs into a civilized and organized community. The success of the Prophet in this context is even acknowledged by Western scholars. What is evident is that the greatness of a man lies not in his own person but in his ability to work collectively with those he leads. Working

collectively as a team is a principle worth emulating as we drive the Malay mind towards success.

In the contemporary context, the most important aspect of transformational leadership is performance. It is in fact synonymous with leadership excellence. Even Alexander The Great would not have been an excellent leader and would not have been able to command his legions were it not for the fact that he had performed and proven himself in his battles to conquer new territories.

In this modern age, performance is absolutely essential. As the saying goes “Vision without Action is just a dream, and action without vision is meaningless”. Transformational leadership combines vision and action in all matters. Through transformational leadership we will be able to make the quantum leap towards attaining developed status by the year 2020. We must therefore accelerate the Malay mind through dynamic transformational leadership.

## **Second: Accelerating The Malay Mind Towards Working As A Team**

Ladies and gentlemen,

The founder of Umno, Dato Onn Jaafar said “We wish to see our country and our people safe and strong, and we can only be strong if we are united.” It would be most unfortunate if we choose not to unite and each goes his way. Our dreams and aspirations will all be shattered. Therefore, in this great hall, I wish to remind all of us of the importance of working as one team.

The most important thing in strengthening the party is to drive the minds of members towards embracing teamwork based on the concept of ‘Jemaah’ as was espoused by the Prophet Muhammad. ‘Jemaah’ simply translated, means unity. It calls upon us to avoid any form of discord and isolation. As the Holy Prophet said, “Jemaah is a blessing, and disunity is suffering”.

Therefore this concept of working as a team demands that we are more tolerant and accepting of other’s viewpoints and even criticism, facing each one with an open mind and a calm disposition. As the saying goes, “unite in the things that we agree, confer on the things we differ”. By working as a team that is tolerant and understanding of each other, we will dispel any seed of discord. We must be able to advise each other and this is in line with the principle that the interest of the party is always over and above the interest of the individual.

### **Third: Accelerating the Malay Mind towards the success of the Malay Agenda**

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Malay Agenda is Umno's main task in uplifting the status of the Malays. In the course of history, from 1511 to 1957, we were under the rule of foreigners. After those 446 years of oppression, it is impossible that what is owed to the Malays can be repaid in a mere 20 or 30 years. In this struggle for the Malays, it must be firmly said that there is no time limit within which we must achieve our targets.

For as long as our goals are not achieved, we will continue the struggle, deploying every available resources, for the sake of our people. What we struggle for are our rights, without denying the rights of others.

Recently, we heard of a skewed study that alleged that the equity holdings of Bumiputera stood at more than 45%, compared to actual figures of only 18.9%. This 45% figure is most unrealistic simply because of the inaccurate assessment and conclusion that the study makes. For example, the study considers GLCs like Petronas, Telekom Malaysia and Tenaga Nasional as Bumiputera-owned when in actual fact the government owns them.

As a point of information, it must be known that the government's 18.9% figure is derived from the data of 600,000 companies, compared to only 1,000 public listed companies considered by that erroneous study as their sample. Fortunately, that allegation has been completely dispelled by politicians, scholars, Malay entrepreneurs, and most significantly by the Prime Minister himself. As I have warned before, let no one suggest that the government is not transparent in providing data on the equity holdings of the Malays.

What is important is that we do not forget this equitable distribution that we uphold, is only meaningful if our development and growth is continuous and sustainable. In this context, we ask all races to join us as real partners, to work together, to strengthen the economy. For us, the challenge is to accelerate the Malay mind to seek new sources of wealth, without only looking towards equity and share holdings.

Malays must increase their wealth by way of prime real-estate ownership in cities and towns, financial instruments like bonds and venture capital, intellectual property and assets in other countries.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Malays must be able to partake in the battle of minds in a global environment. Go forth and seek knowledge driven jobs both in and outside the country. To the

Malay entrepreneurs, grab every opportunity available to you across the globe. We wish to see Malays involved directly in the creation of their own wealth without depending on others or on government exclusively. Don't be too dependent on the opportunities found in the public sector when the opportunities in the private sector are far greater. The fact is that private sector spending is many times bigger than that of the public sector.

Here, I wish to share the latest thinking strategy introduced by Prof. W.C. Kim of South Korea called the Blue Ocean Strategy, from his book of the same name. The Blue Ocean Strategy, its opposite being Red Ocean, accelerates our mind to innovate, to be creative and to think ahead in exploring new ways of doing business that would rise above competition. As a simple example, a full service airline business is considered a red ocean venture, because competition is intense. But in the midst of this competition, a low fare no frills airline like Air-Asia, is a blue ocean venture.

Other examples are such as operating a terrestrial television station that is red ocean, whereas pay TV is blue ocean; Roadside coffee shops are red ocean, whereas chic cafes like Starbucks or Coffee Bean in strategic locations is a blue ocean approach. Malay entrepreneurs therefore, must adopt the Blue Ocean Strategy in order to be competitive, sustainable and profitable.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It must be emphasized here that the Malay agenda is our plan of action to make Malays excel in education, be strong in the economy, resilient in the social sphere and outstanding on the world stage. Umno is serious in realizing these aspirations and we will not waver until this is achieved.

Let it not happen that when the dawn of January 1st 2020 arrives, Malays wail in protest against the declaration that Malaysia is a developed nation, because they are still not developed.

This is why Umno's struggle for the education of the Malays will continue. As an example, at last year's assembly, it was advocated that the students of UiTM be increased to 200,000 by 2010, compared to 100,000 today. We are grateful that the Umno-led government has approved more than RM3bil in allocation for this purpose. The concept of democratising education will be given strong focus in order to ensure equal access to quality education. If previously we worked hard to provide more education opportunities, today we work towards ensuring that the education provided is of high quality in terms of infrastructure, learning tools and more importantly, the teachers.

Indeed the achievements of Malay children in rural areas can be catapulted with the presence of quality teachers. Even under developed schools in remote areas can be transformed into lively learning centres through the work of creative

teachers. When we can achieve this, only then can we succeed in creating human capital with a first-class mentality, through sound education.

Since the last Umno General Assembly, we are pleased to report that we have institutionalised the Malay agenda. Among other things, we have formed 12 main groups in various fields to draft special initiatives for the Malay agenda. Recently, the government formed the “Lembaga Kemajuan Bandar” to resuscitate the original functions of UDA to strengthen the position of urban Malays.

According to 2005 statistics from the Economic Planning Unit of the PM’s Department, commercial buildings and premises owned by Bumiputera stands at only 11.7% compared to 71% owned by the Chinese.

It is based on this that the Yayasan Hartanah Bumiputera was formed with an initial capital of RM2bil to ensure that real estate that is beyond the reach of Malay individuals can be purchased by way of a collective fund. Apart from that various other initiatives have been taken to increase Bumiputera involvement in the Bursa Malaysia.

Clearly the Malay agenda will continue to be strengthened in the 9th Malaysia Plan. Whatever is required for Malay development, we will push for it so that it is immediately implemented and immediately constructed. What is important, is that this great trust that we hold is never manipulated, never leaked and never abandoned. At the highest level, the Prime Minister chairs the National Implementation Task Force (NITF) that is testimony to his commitment in ensuring the success of the 9th Malaysia Plan.

The implementation machinery, especially the civil service, must be dedicated. They must reduce red tape and intensify cooperation with the private sector, whilst providing service beyond the ordinary. At the same time party leaders at all levels must play their role in ensuring the success of this plan.

#### **Fourth: Accelerating The Malay Mind by Protecting the Akidah**

Lately, we have been faced with various issues that have threatened the position of Islam. We have seen the rise in wrongful teachings, apostasy cases and we have seen groups protesting Constitutional provisions relating to Islam, namely Article 11 and Article 121(1A) of the Federal Constitution. All of these are assaults on the sanctity of Islam and attempts to shake the akidah of the ummah.

We wish to warn those irresponsible parties to immediately extinguish these flames of incitement that can destroy the harmony of races and religions. Umno strongly opposes the formation of the so-called Interfaith Council that can threaten the harmony of this country. The question of religion is a sensitive issue and all must understand this. Therefore we must all be extremely cautious in

dealing with such matters for the sake of unity. Umno will not waver from its position as defenders of Islam in this country.

Indeed the role of the family is crucial in protecting the Akidah. Every family member must have a deep understanding of Islam and must make it a part of their way of life. In an increasingly challenging environment, maintaining a harmonious family environment is not easy. Children are exposed to all sorts of things that must be carefully monitored. Parents must therefore also have good parenting skills apart from religious knowledge.

Children meanwhile, must be trained in terms of their mentality and character as early as possible. This is why we have established a special council specifically to look into early childhood education of children up to the age of six. All of us, especially Wanita and Puteri must take the initiative to support this initiative. Only through good education and a clear understanding of Islam can we foster a society that is based on the correct Akidah. Holding on to a strong Akidah and the correct teachings of Islam, the Muslims in this country can move forward towards attaining success and we will become the Model Muslim nation that is respected by all.

#### **Fifth: Accelerating the Minds Of Young Malays**

Ladies and gentlemen,

Having stated the four points in accelerating the Malay Mind, the question now is, where are our youth in terms of preparedness to face the challenges of the future? If we were to reflect, the role of the younger generation has always been essential in the history of human civilization. The younger generation can be the drivers of change within society.

In the course of history, we have seen the likes of Muhammad Al Fateh who opened Constantinople at the age of 21 and Usamah Bin Zaid who was only 18 when he led the battle against Rome. Clearly, the transformation of a particular society and civilization is heavily reliant on the younger generation. In our own history, leaders like the late Tun Abdul Razak, the late Tun Hussein Onn, the late Tun Ghafar, Tun Fatimah Hashim and Tan Sri Aishah Ghani were all quite young when they fought for independence and inherited this nation. They were all in their 20s and 30s, like many of you in this hall tonight.

Unfortunately, today, the younger generation who are supposed to be in the front lines of our struggle, are much too easily influenced by negative elements. Many live hedonistic lives, with no attachments to religion, culture or customs. We are also faced with incidences of school dropouts, drugs, HIV/AIDS, Mat Rempit, and excessive entertainment.

All of this is very disappointing and reflects a third class mentality. This social problem is among the main reasons that lower the status of Malays and puts us at a disadvantage.

Therefore, it is the responsibility of Umno to curb this problem by accelerating the minds of the younger generation towards embracing positive attitudes and new ways of thinking. All organisations must conduct programmes that foster positive values among the young. This is the best and smartest investment to make so that Malay achievements are increased, and failures reduced.

To the young, I ask you not to question what the country has given to you, for indeed it has given a lot. Become a generation that serves the nation with dedication and commitment. Above all, we wish to ensure that those who will inherit this nation of ours are not from among weaklings, but from among the strong and capable.

### **The Current Political Scenario**

Ladies and gentlemen,

The tradition in Umno has been the complete loyalty to our leaders. The tradition of Umno emphasises consensus in the name of Unity. We must be united behind Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, our party President and Prime Minister. That is the unity and loyalty needed to achieve our aspirations. Leaders come and leaders go. Every Prime Minister has served, has contributed in their respective eras, the record of their work indelibly carved in gold and placed in the exalted corridors of history. Today's generation acknowledges and greatly appreciates every idea, and every policy that has transformed the socio-political landscape of our people. Their contributions of our past leaders are invaluable; our respect for them cannot be described by mere words.

But there is great apprehension when the leaders we cherish begin to squabble. And the worry increases when the opposition tries to take advantage. How much of a relief it would be, if we could be given the opportunity to build this nation without having to face such challenges. Can we afford to have differences when we are only 13 years away from attaining our aspirations? Can we afford to have conflicts when our people are still weak in their own country? Quarrels will only lead to disunity. It is therefore the hope of all those who are dedicated to religion, race and country, that the light of peace will shine and illuminate the current sombre environment.

## **Conclusion**

We are committed to accelerating the Malay mind in our effort to foster a generation of Malays with a culture of excellence. Accelerating the Malay mind puts emphasis on positive values like trustworthiness, intelligence, efficiency and dedication. In other words, negative attitudes reflecting laziness and half-hearted efforts must be eradicated from the Malay mind.

Remember, anyone can be great. The secret of greatness lies in hard work and deliberate practice. It involves intensive and continuous training to improve performance, based on the correct mindset, on the back of prayers and surrender to the will of God. God willing, we will succeed. We wish to see the culture of excellence entrenched in ourselves, our families, schools, offices, our party, our businesses and in every aspect of our daily lives. What is clear is that in a challenging world like this, only those with great minds, with a willingness to work hard and with positive values will excel.

Indeed Malaysia is on the path paved by the Prime Minister in his vision of Islam Hadhari. We must change the way we think and abandon outmoded ways of thinking. Muslims must be the best ummah, the most excellent. As the best Ummah, we wish to build a great civilization for our benefit in this world and in the hereafter.

Source: <http://thestar.com.my>