

By : DATO' SRI MOHD NAJIB TUN ABD RAZAK
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MALAYSIAN UNIVERSITIES AND IMPERIAL COLLEGE, LONDON

Speech By
Dato' Sri Mohd Najib Tun Razak
Deputy Prime Minister Of Malaysia
At The Mou Signing Ceremony Between
Malaysian Universities and Imperial College London

11 July 2005, 12.30 Noon
Marriot Putrajaya Hotel

Y.B. Dato' Dr. Shafie bin Hj. Mohd Salleh
Minister of Higher Education;

Y.B. Dato' Fu Ah Kiow
Deputy Minister of Higher Education;

Sir Richard Sykes
Rector, Imperial College London;

His Excellency Bruce Cleghorn
British High Commissioner;

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Terlebih dahulu marilah kita sama-sama melafazkan kesyukuran kepada Allah SWT kerana kita dapat berhimpun pada hari ini sempena Majlis Menandatangani Memorandum Persefahaman di antara beberapa universiti tempatan dan Imperial College London.

Ladies and gentlemen,

1. Thank you for inviting me to be part of this groundbreaking initiative of establishing a formal collaboration programme between Malaysian Universities and Imperial College. I am glad to be here today and I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all the parties involved for your collective efforts to officially formalise the Split PhD programme that will be jointly undertaken by selected Malaysian Universities and Imperial College.

2. Given last Thursday's brutal terrorist attacks in London, let me also take this opportunity to express here once again our sympathy and condolences to the British people and to others who have lost their countrymen. This tragic loss of life has struck a deep chord among a good many of us here because as you know, Malaysians have traditionally studied, lived or worked in Britain. I understand that

Imperial College too has been host to one of the largest contingents of Malaysian students in the capital. London therefore has a special place in the minds and hearts of a great number of Malaysians.

3. A Frenchman (Napoleon) once remarked: "There are only two forces in the world, the sword and the spirit - but in the long run the sword will always be conquered by the spirit". I am confident that the indomitable spirit of the British people, the dignity and resilience that so characterises you, will ensure that Britain will emerge from this tragedy stronger than ever.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

4. The signing of today's MoU between Malaysian Universities and Imperial College London represents the beginning of a long-term partnership that promises to yield great benefits to both parties in terms of academic and research collaboration. For Malaysia, this partnership also represents a significant milestone in our effort to internationalise our higher education sector. Like Britain, Malaysia has benefited tremendously from engaging with the rest of the world. Just as our companies and governments have found it necessary to think and act globally in this rapidly converging environment, our universities too have found it necessary to include an international perspective in their core business of teaching, research and service.

5. The proposed Split PhD programme, named as the Malaysia – Imperial Doctoral Programme (MIDP), to be implemented between Malaysian Universities and Imperial College London, will add a new dimension to our higher education sector through institutional collaboration and linkages between top British and Malaysian universities. It will provide an innovative arrangement for doctoral candidates to collaborate with faculty, access intellectual capital and engage in research activities across two institutions on opposite sides of the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

6. Malaysia has aspirations to become a regional hub for educational excellence. In this regard, we have been fairly successful in attracting a number of foreign institutions to our shores, either via twinning programmes or through the establishment of branch campuses. We are also seeing a growing number of international students coming to Malaysia given our competitiveness and favourable environment. However, as we embark on this internationalisation process, we remain mindful that in this new knowledge economy where talent is globally mobile, institutions have many options on where to devote their resources to build partnerships and individuals have many choices in terms of where to spend their money to acquire a quality tertiary education.

7. Quality is therefore a crucial factor in sustaining the attractiveness of our higher education sector. Any university or college that is considering internationalising its campus must be able to provide high quality programmes that can gain international standing over time. It is all about reputation. In this regard, an initial step towards gaining international recognition could be in the form of teaming up with globally recognised educational institutions under tightly defined and rigorously enforced conditions, to establish a system of joint recognition and award of higher education qualifications. As Malaysian universities begin to seek out such collaborative partnerships, it is crucial that they possess the long-term commitment, develop the deep capabilities and dedicate the right resources to work effectively with

international partners and eventually develop programmes that are of international standing.

8. In a world where a talented workforce with relevant knowledge and skills is arguably a nation's greatest competitive advantage, there is always scope for new and emerging markets for all forms of higher education and professional or vocational competence. Even in Malaysia, new markets for higher and continuing education and training are continually evolving. In the light of this situation, the Malaysian government has taken various measures to promote higher learning among all Malaysians. The Government has initiated efforts to promote and implement programmes for internationalising our higher education sector. In this respect, the Government has entrusted the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) to play the lead role and to coordinate efforts among key stakeholders in the public and the private sectors.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

9. I would like to take this opportunity to turn to the question of research. We all fully understand that cutting-edge research in all the disciplines is not only the bedrock of effective teaching but also the principal means of advancing knowledge creation to finding long-term solutions to global problems. In this regard, Imperial College has a reputation for leading edge research in a number of fields that is truly world class. You are therefore an ideal partner for Malaysia and Malaysian universities.

10. I would like to see that the collaboration between Malaysian Universities and Imperial College consider practical ways to advance research in specific areas and disciplines – research that has special significance for both institutions, and that leverages on the unique strengths and natural advantages of both countries. One way to do this will be to build research clusters of scholars, bringing together both senior, established researchers and promising junior researchers from Malaysia and Britain.

11. This can be achieved through concentrated, multinational groupings of researchers who can explore issues of importance to business, to the public sector and government, and to the wider community. Of course, in order to establish collaborative research of this kind, we will require resources and not all countries have an abundance of resources. This is where we must develop innovative mechanisms that are mutually beneficial, so that funds and expertise can be pooled and the whole communities of researchers can benefit through a win-win concept.

Ladies and Gentlemen

12. As a rapidly developing country that aspires to become fully developed by 2020, Malaysia is a nation in a hurry. We recognise that in order to become truly developed, we will need to shift from being merely competent and efficient users of knowledge capital, to become innovative and prolific contributors to the world's pool of intellectual capital. It is perhaps this strength – the ability to invent, to innovate and to create – that distinguishes the most successful economies and nations of the world. To be sure, we have begun to distinguish ourselves in certain fields (e.g. palm oil research, Islamic finance), but in many other areas, we still have some ways to go. Our eagerness and commitment to collaborate with world-class educational and research institutions must therefore be seen in this context – as part of our quest to

become contributors to the advancement of knowledge and learning for the betterment of humankind. Only then can Malaysia claim to have joined the ranks of the developed world and lead the way for others to follow. I am truly pleased that Imperial College has chosen to become Malaysia's partner in this momentous journey.

13. Let me end my remarks by once again congratulating Imperial College London and the Malaysian Universities here today for taking this important step towards further enhancing the educational and research ties between our two countries. I wish you a successful partnership and look forward to seeing positive results from today's understanding.

Thank you.