

**SPEECH BY
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AT THE AWARDS CEREMONY
AT THE ROTARY RESEARCH FOUNDATION
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First, let me wish everyone here a very good evening. I would also like to express my thanks to the Rotary Club Kuala Lumpur for having invited my wife and me to attend the Rotary research foundation awards ceremony.

2. The kelab Rotary Diraja Kuala Lumpur is, as I understand, is the oldest in the country and also the only one in the world with a royal charter. The club has also established a fine tradition of rewarding outstanding achievements in research through its foundation which was set up in 1981/1982 rotary year under the chairmanship of Dr Jagjit Singh Sambhi.

Ladies & gentlemen

3. The quest for knowledge is an unending journey and knowledge can only be beneficial when used for the advancement and betterment of humanity. In this technology-driven world, individuals and nations which falter will be left behind to their own detriment and that of their societies.

4. The Malaysian government places the highest premium on this quest for knowledge. Tax incentives are given for firms which are encouraged to set up their own R&D facilities. The multimedia super corridor is another example of the government's commitment to make Malaysia and Malaysians a knowledge- rich society. Numerous universities and institutes of higher learning have been set up to encourage and to produce a skilled and technology-equipped society.

5. As such, we view as laudable the efforts by groups such as the kelab Rotary Diraja Kuala Lumpur in rewarding excellence in the quest for knowledge.

6. I am informed that this is the fifth award ceremony since its inception. Since 1982, 11 gold medals and 13 research fellowships have been awarded. Today, a furthers 8 gold medals for outstanding achievements and 6 research fellowships will be given out.

Ladies & gentlemen

7. I always maintain that history is our greatest teacher. If we go back in time, we will note that pre- renaissance Europe was backwards, ill-equipped and strife with conflict. But with the renaissance, Europe embraced a modern era. Knowledge in various fields was acquired systematically and more institutions of learning were set up. Industrial techniques and materials were created and produced and this became the foundation for Europe to become great.

8. In Islam, the first word of the first verses of the holy Quran to be revealed is "read". The role of reading in the propagation of Islam is clear and definite. So, too, is the role of reading in education and the spread of knowledge.

9. If education was once looked upon merely as a means of earning a living in the world, today, it is much more than that. With globalisation, education has become a necessity for survival of societies and nations.

10. In Malaysia, we have undergone a revolution of the mind over the last two decades. There was a time when we struggled to achieve the barest minimum in educational standards.

11. But with independence and with careful and systematic planning and motivation, we have today become a society which embraces challenges and in the spirit of Malaysia boleh, overcomes and succeeds.

12. Today, we believe in ourselves and we see our country and our people achieving newer and greater heights in areas such as international diplomacy, sports and education. We have to continue to nurture this spirit of Malaysia boleh to ensure that our children and their children become a confident people able to compete with the rest of the world on an equal footing. The only way we can achieve that is if we continue to pursue the quest for knowledge with an unending zeal.

13. As such, the Rotary club's efforts in this area are not merely worthy of support but should be emulated by other like-minded institutions, both corporate and non-corporate. Such efforts will supplement government efforts for the advancement of the Malaysia people and the end result will be beneficial to the larger Malaysian society.

Ladies & gentlemen

14. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the recipients of the various research fellowship and gold medal awards tonight and hope they will utilise these fellowships for the benefit of our people and our country.

15. In conclusion, I would like once again to thank the kelab Rotary Diraja Kuala Lumpur for having invited my wife and me. It is our hope that the foundation will grow and be able to give out more awards in the coming years to further benefit our society.

Thank you.