

**SPEECH BY
YAB DATO' SERI ABDULLAH BIN HAJI AHMAD BADAWI
AT MAJLIS PERASMIAN KOLEJ INTI MALAYSIA
AT KOLEJ INTI, BANDAR BARU NILAI
2 AUGUST 2001**

Terlebih dahulu saya mengucapkan terima kasih kepada pihak Kolej Inti Malaysia kerana telah sudi menjemput saya untuk merasmikan pembukaan Kolej Inti Malaysia pada hari ini. Saya difahamkan majlis perasmian ini adalah bersempena dengan sambutan ulang tahun Kolej Inti yang ke 15. Saya mengambil kesempatan ini untuk mengucapkan tahniah kepada Lembaga Pengarah serta kakitangan Kolej Inti di atas kejayaan menubuhkan sebuah kampus induk, buat Kumpulan Kolej Inti, yang jelas luas serta mempunyai kemudahan pembelajaran yang terkini.

2. I am greatly honoured to be here to formalise the Official Opening of Inti College Malaysia, which is the main campus of the Inti Group of colleges. The Inti Group has an impressive number of 5 colleges locally, and has established 3 international campuses in China, Thailand and Indonesia. Indeed, I understand that there are further plans to set up another international campus by the year end.

3. I am extremely proud that Inti, a Malaysian institution of higher learning, has successfully marketed its own brand of quality academic programmes to other countries, thereby carrying Malaysia's good name abroad. By expanding its presence beyond local shores, Inti is exercising good business sense, and in the process proving that the government's vision to position education as an export commodity can indeed be achieved.

4. The government regards education as central to national development. Right from the earliest of time, the emphasis placed on education was geared towards the creation of a progressive society. As such, concerted steps have continuously been taken to widen the people's access to education. Allocations made for education under the various Malaysia Development Plans have always been significant. We have noticed that Malaysia's growth and prosperity over the years can be largely attributed to our continued investment in education. Indeed, the current 8th Malaysia Plan has set aside RM 22.66 billion for both education and training, while the previous plan had allocated RM 20.19 billion.

5. Having taken stock of our achievements so far, we must now plan for the future. The way forward for Malaysia is to ensure the fulfilment of the country's development blueprint, Vision 2020, which charts the country's course to becoming a fully developed nation. Herein lies the role of education - that is, to equip Malaysians, especially the young, with the knowledge and skills required to enhance our productivity, and subsequently, our competitiveness. The magnitude of the task is that much greater, given that the demographics of Malaysia is such that about 52% of the population is below 25, with nine million people, or 39% below 18 years of age. Emphasis on education will thus continue to be the main ingredient for our success and I assure you, there will be no let-up to this.

6. As you may be aware, Malaysia is preparing to transition into becoming a knowledge-based economy. We are cognisant that innovation and creativity are now

the core values of the new economy and that intelligence or intellectual capital is now the key source of competitive advantage. It is thus contingent upon the education sector, particularly higher education, to increase the quantity and quality of the nation's human resource capital.

7. We have, for a long time now, realised that the government alone cannot produce the critical mass of knowledge workers needed to fuel the economy. We appreciate and applaud the proactive approach of private education institutions like Inti College, which offer world class academic programmes and produce graduates equipped with the latest knowledge and information, which are, at the same time, industry-relevant.

8. The objective of tertiary education cannot solely be the acquisition of academic knowledge. It is important that the education received by students is holistic in nature and prepares them for life. We do not want graduates who merely regurgitate the knowledge they receive while in college or university. The nation urgently requires highly skilled people with a global mind-set, who are bold and can configure knowledge and apply it to a wide range of contexts. This new corp of workers will be the nation's problem-identifiers, problem-solvers, and problem brokers.

9. All of us here will recall that it was the unconventional strategies, put together by Malaysian leaders and advisers who, in turn, were supported by the determined local private sector, that led to the country's speedy recovery from the regional currency crisis in 1997. We will need even more such thinkers and doers in the years to come, in order to weather the many storms that will surely come our way. Our education system must have the capacity to ensure that we will continue to be successful in confronting the many threats and challenges to our nation.

10. Providers of higher education must therefore undertake the comprehensive development of students. I am happy to hear that Inti College and Inti branch campuses provide academic programmes with in-built modules that train students in analytical thinking and communications skills. I am also especially pleased to learn of the college's commitment to extra-curricular activities as a means to develop students' leadership skills and promote the awareness of their own social responsibilities.

11. It is important that all parties recognise that the impact of globalisation will need to be managed carefully. By operating within the borderless world, countries are now open to a new world order and its attendant universal practices. Malaysians, especially the young, must be educated on the need to strike a balance between the adoption of global values and the fulfilment of national aspirations. To achieve this, education institutions must open student minds to the world of possibilities, and yet firmly root them to our unique history, culture and way of life. We must ensure that our youth fully participates in the globalised world and, at the same time, meaningfully contributes to Malaysia's development. We must instil a culture and value system that pursues excellence and seeks boldness in conquering new heights, but yet appreciates and preserves racial integration, shows compassion for the poor and disadvantaged, and pursues continued stability and prosperity for all Malaysians.

12. I am extremely pleased at the private sector's involvement in complementing the government's efforts to making Malaysia a regional hub for educational excellence. Judging from the already sizeable population of international students currently enrolled in Malaysian institutions of higher learning, the country appears on track

towards achieving that objective. A recent survey conducted on international students by an education publication revealed that between the end of 1999 and the year 2000, there were about 23,000 international students from more than 115 countries studying in Malaysia. Of this figure, 11,000 were in private tertiary institutions. Current international student numbers in private tertiary institutions are estimated at between 12,000-15,000. I would like to commend Inti College for having attracted over 2,200 international students to its local campuses, the biggest number of international students found in any private tertiary institution. We applaud your successful efforts to project the college as an international centre of learning.

13. I would like to urge other institutions of higher learning to emulate Inti's student-focused efforts. I am impressed by Inti's ongoing initiatives to offer quality market-driven programmes and to install sophisticated infrastructure aimed at enhancing the learning process, through a familiarity with information and communications technology. 14. As a final note, I would like to congratulate Inti College management and staff for having made a significant contribution to the Malaysian education industry for almost 15 years, and I hereby take great pleasure to officially declare open your main campus, Inti College Malaysia.

Thank you.