

**SPEECH BY
YAB DATO' SERI ABDULLAH BIN HAJI AHMAD BADAWI
AT THE MAJLIS MAKAN MALAM ULANGTAHUN KE-42
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Bersyukur kita ke hadrat Allah S.W.T. kerana dengan limpah kurnia Nya kita dapat berkumpul pada malam ini dalam Majlis Makan Malam ke-42 Institutsi Jurutera Malaysia.

2. Saya ingin mengucapkan ribuan terima kasih kepada IEM yang telah sudi menjemput saya dan isteri saya ke majlis ini. Saya amat berbesar hati kerana dapat bersama-sama dengan golongan profesional yang turut sama memainkan peranan penting di dalam arus perdana pembangunan ekonomi serta infrastruktur negara.

3. The engineering profession has played a key role in the development of our country. The contribution of engineers, along with other professionals, have without doubt, helped to boding about the nation's prosperity. I am glad that through the hard times such as the economic downturn and currency crisis of 1997, engineers and the Institute of Engineers, Malaysia (IEM), had contributed to improve the well being of Malaysia and its people.

4. It was during the crisis that the private sector, including engineering firms were badly hit with the loss of consulting and construction jobs. But engineers proved to be very resilient and their patience paid off. Now that the economy is back on track, they can continue to play their role in the nation's development. For this, I thank and salute the engineers.

5. As a country that has been independent for less than half a century, visitors are often amazed at the development and infrastructure in Malaysia. It cannot be denied, even by our staunchest critics, that we have done well in bringing development to our people.

6. The engineering profession has contributed a lot towards this through its involvement in infrastructural and technical development. IEM has also contributed a lot in numerous national forums, technical investigations, policy studies, drafting of codes of practice and standards, improvement of the manufacturing processes and cleaning up of the environment. The direct contributions of engineers are evident by the successful completion of many national projects.

7. I would like to record our appreciation to IEM for its numerous programmes and activities, including its efforts on making Malaysia a hub of engineering activities. IEM has shown its commitment by setting up the Commonwealth Young Engineers Network and the presidency and secretariat of the Federation of Engineering Institutions of South-East Asia and the Pacific.

8. It has also participated actively in formulating guidelines in the accreditation of engineering degrees and engineering education model that contributes directly to the Government's efforts in making Malaysia a center of excellence in education.

9. Nevertheless, there is still much to do and we face new challenges everyday in our quest for excellence. The future of the world is going to be greatly intmenced and determined by globalisation and liberalization. The changes that will be brought about are inevitable. These changes will present us both with opportunities and also new threats.

10. In a borderless world with progressive trade liberalization we have before us new markets for our goods and services. Herein lies the opportunity for us to co-operate and develop smart partnerships with both developed and less developed economies. To succeed in this highly competitive world, we have no choice but to keep on improving our technologies, develop new materials and processes that are more environment- friendly and energy and cost efficient.

11. Only then can we be successful as a technologically cultured and technologically matured nation.

12. I must stress here that for us to succeed as a nation and as a people, there has to be co-operation all round between the Government and its agencies and the private sector, including institutions such as IEM. If we have this co-operation we can capitalize on the opportunities available.

13. Such co-operation and adherence to the discipline of upgrading our technological skills will also enable us to face the threats of trade and services liberalization on our economy. When the world opens up, our professionals and service industry will have to compete with international and foreign firms in our domestic market. If we are not prepared, then we will louse out .

14. Therefore, I would urge engineers not only to achieve efficiency in manufacturing processes but also to produce quality products and services.

In this respect, IEM's effort towards promoting and organizing world class international conferences and congresses is a step in the right direction to facilitate technology transfer. It can only take place if our engineers are diligent and show keenness to receive the transfer. R & D efforts by both institutions of higher learning and research institutes must be intensified. It must also be given the rightful place. The culture of innovation has to be firmly established amongst the Malaysian workforce. It is my sincere hope that IEM will continue promoting towards the enhancement of the engineering profession and develop a Malaysian technology culture.

15. Engineering firms in both the consulting and contracting sectors must be at the forefront in both technical knowledge and financial skills. These are the ingredients that will allow us to compete effectively with our counterparts in the more developed countries.

16. It is unfortunate but as happens everywhere, we see in Malaysia a tendency for professionals in many fields preferring to become so project-oriented that they lose sight of the need to improve their skills and keep up with changes in technology.

17. The fast pace of development in Malaysia, especially over the last two decades, has seen professionals, including engineers, involved in infrastructure and planning, becoming more engrossed and obsessed with securing projects. So much so, they forget that to keep ahead, they have to continue giving emphasis to R & D.

18. It is my hope that a balance can be reached where the quest to boost the bottomline is not compromised and that constant upgrading of skills and keeping up with technology is an objective which receives equal priority and emphasis.

19. Engineers will face new challenges from the rapid developments in biology, micro-machines, robots and Information Technology. New systems, networks and engineering pose new threats of dislocation if not properly addressed by the local engineering community. Biological systems, biological engineering, medicine and bio-medical engineering are areas that would greatly impact human lives and must also be addressed.

20. The K-economy, coupled with the impacts of globalisation and liberalization of trade and services on our national economy cannot be under estimated. It is in the face of these challenges that the Government is formulating the K-economy masterplan. I hope that IEM can contribute effectively in this effort.

21. Akhir kata, saya ingin sekali lagi ucapkan ribuan terima kasih kepada IEM kerana memberi saya peluang untuk bertemu dan ramah mesra dengan para jurutera sekalian. Saya mengucapkan selamat maju jaya kepada IEM dalam semua usahanya.

TERIMA KASIH.