

SPEECH BY
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AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF LIMKOKWING UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF
CREATIVE TECHNOLOGY AND MALAYSIA DESIGN AND INNOVATION CENTRE
AT CYBERJAYA, 11 OCTOBER 2004

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EXCELLENCIES

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

1. ALLOW ME TO FIRST THANK THE LIMKOKWING UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF CREATIVE TECHNOLOGY FOR INVITING ME TO LAUNCH ITS NEW CAMPUS AS WELL AS THE MALAYSIA DESIGN AND INNOVATION CENTRE IN CYBERJAYA. IT IS A PLEASURE FOR ME TO BE HERE WITH YOU TO CELEBRATE THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THESE TWO INSTITUTIONS. I AM CONFIDENT THAT BOTH THE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE AND THE MALAYSIA DESIGN CENTRE WILL PLAY A LEADING ROLE IN DEVELOPING SKILLED HUMAN RESOURCE IN THE CREATIVE FIELDS FOR THE BENEFIT OF MALAYSIA AND THE WIDER WORLD.

2. THE DEVELOPMENT OF SKILLED HUMAN RESOURCE IS AN AREA OF GREAT CONCERN TO ME AND MY GOVERNMENT. IN FACT, HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT IS ONE OF THE FOUR STRATEGIC THRUSTS OF THE 2005 BUDGET THAT I RECENTLY PROPOSED. THE PRIORITY I PLACE ON HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT IS PREDICATED ON MY BELIEF THAT PEOPLE ARE A COUNTRY'S MOST VALUABLE ASSET. IT IS PEOPLE WHO DO THE THINKING AND PLANNING; PEOPLE WHO EXECUTE AND IMPLEMENT; PEOPLE WHO BUILD AND DEVELOP INDUSTRIES. IN SHORT, IT IS PEOPLE WHO ADVANCE NATIONS.

3. GIVEN THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF PEOPLE IN DEVELOPMENT, IT IS PIVOTAL THAT MALAYSIA, WHICH SEEKS TO ADVANCE TO DEVELOPED NATION STATUS WITHIN THE NEXT 15 YEARS, MAKES GREATER EFFORTS TO DEVELOP SKILLED HUMAN CAPITAL. INDEED, AS THE WORLD BECOMES MORE COMPETITIVE AND MORE COMPLEX, SUCCESS AND PROSPERITY WILL INCREASINGLY GO TO THOSE WHO ADD VALUE IN THE GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAIN. NOWADAYS, "KNOWLEDGE", "INNOVATION" AND "CREATIVITY" HAVE BECOME THE NEW SOURCES OF VALUE IN

AN ECONOMY, AND THEREFORE, THE MAIN DRIVERS OF A COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC GROWTH. INDUSTRIES AND COMPANIES THAT HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED THROUGH CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION DRIVE MANY OF THE WORLD'S MOST SUCCESSFUL ECONOMIES TODAY.

4. I STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT IN ORDER TO FACE THE NEW REALITIES AND COMPETE SUCCESSFULLY IN THE NEW ECONOMY, MALAYSIA MUST STRENGTHEN ITS CAPACITY IN, AND THE ENVIRONMENT FOR, INNOVATION AND KNOWLEDGE-CREATION ACTIVITIES. I HAVE ALREADY OUTLINED ELSEWHERE SOME OF THE STEPS MY GOVERNMENT IS TAKING TO STRENGTHEN THE NATIONAL INNOVATION SYSTEM, INCLUDING FORGING CLOSER UNIVERSITY AND ACADEMIA LINKS, INCREASING COMMERCIALISATION OF R&D ACTIVITIES, AS WELL AS IMPROVING THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK TO PROTECT INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS.

5. I AM PLEASED TO NOTE THAT SOME OF THESE MEASURES, PARTICULARLY THE NEED TO FORGE CLOSER UNIVERSITY-ACADEMIA LINKS AND INCREASING COMMERCIALISATION OF RESEARCH, HAVE RESONATED WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR. I BELIEVE THAT WITH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MALAYSIA DESIGN AND INNOVATION CENTRE, WE HAVE TAKEN ANOTHER STEP FORWARD IN BUILDING OUR CAPACITY TO PRODUCE INNOVATIVE PRODUCTS AND SERVICES THAT WILL ENHANCE THE COUNTRY'S INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS. THE CENTRE IS SET TO PLAY AN EFFECTIVE ROLE TO CONNECT INDUSTRY, ACADEMIA AND GOVERNMENT IN ORDER TO QUICKEN THE PACE OF DEVELOPMENT OF OUR CREATIVE INDUSTRIES AND NURTURE MORE MALAYSIAN GLOBAL BRANDS. I AM CONFIDENT THAT THE CENTRE WILL PLAY A KEY ROLE IN TRANSLATING KNOWLEDGE FROM VARIOUS SOURCES INTO USEFUL PRODUCTS AND SERVICES THAT CAN BE MARKETED AND COMMERCIALISED.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

6. THE MEASURES I OUTLINED AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF INNOVATION HUBS SUCH AS THE MALAYSIA DESIGN CENTRE, NO MATTER HOW IMPORTANT, CANNOT BY THEMSELVES CREATE AN INNOVATIVE, CREATIVE, KNOWLEDGE-DRIVEN SOCIETY. TO BE TRULY EFFECTIVE IN THE LONG-TERM, I BELIEVE THAT THE EDUCATION SECTOR MUST BE STRENGTHENED SO THAT IT WILL PRODUCE A NEW GENERATION OF MALAYSIANS WHO HAVE THE APPROPRIATE KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND CAPABILITIES TO TAKE MALAYSIA FORWARD AND UP THE VALUE-CHAIN.

7. AN EDUCATION SYSTEM THAT EMPHASISES COGNITIVE AND OTHER TRANSFERABLE SKILLS AND BUILDS CAPABILITIES IN SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY WILL ENSURE THAT MALAYSIA'S ECONOMY CONTINUES TO LEAP-FROG. MORE IMPORTANTLY, A GOOD EDUCATION SYSTEM THAT EMPHASISES THESE ASPECTS WILL ENSURE THAT THE PERSONS WHO GRADUATE FROM THE SYSTEM ARE BETTER OFF. AFTER ALL, PEOPLE WHO HAVE THE RIGHT KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND CAPABILITIES WILL BE MORE MARKETABLE, ABLE TO COMMAND BETTER PAY, AND AS THEY ARE EQUIPPED WITH TRANSFERABLE SKILLS, ABLE TO MOVE BETWEEN INDUSTRIES WITH LITTLE COST. THIS MEANS THAT THEY ARE MORE RESILIENT TO ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTIES.

8. THIS IS WHY I USE EVERY OCCASION I CAN TO EMPHASISE TO MALAYSIAN STUDENTS THAT THEY SHOULD USE THE OPPORTUNITIES THAT HAVE BEEN PROVIDED, TO GET A GOOD AND SOUND EDUCATION. MY ADVICE TO STUDENTS HAS ALWAYS BEEN TO STUDY HARD, STUDY SMART, AND ABOVE ALL, LEARN TO LEARN. STUDENTS MUST UNDERSTAND THAT IN A WORLD CHARACTERISED BY GLOBALISATION, RAPID CHANGE, AND INFORMATION EXPLOSION, WHAT ONE LEARNS CAN BECOME OBSOLETE VERY QUICKLY. HAVING THE ABILITY TO "LEARN, UNLEARN, AND RELEARN" QUICKLY AND EFFECTIVELY ENABLES ONE TO MASTER CHANGE AND TO PROSPER IN A GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE-ECONOMY.

9. I THUS FEEL VERY ENCOURAGED TO SEE THAT MALAYSIANS ARE BEGINNING TO VALUE HIGHER EDUCATION MORE. THIS CAN BE SEEN IN THE SHARP INCREASE IN DEMAND FOR PLACES IN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING IN MALAYSIA OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS. IN THE YEAR 2000, 25 PER CENT OF THE 17 TO 23 YEAR-OLD COHORT WAS ENROLED IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTES. IN 2003, THE FIGURE REACHED 29 PER CENT. BY 2010, THE FIGURE IS EXPECTED TO REACH 40 PER CENT. BY 2010, IT IS ESTIMATED THAT 600,000 MORE PLACES IN INSTITUTES OF HIGHER LEARNING WILL HAVE TO BE CREATED TO SUPPLEMENT THE EXISTING 1 MILLION PLACES.

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10. IN ORDER TO MEET THE GROWING DEMAND FOR PLACES IN INSTITUTES OF HIGHER LEARNING AND COMPLEMENT THE EXISTING PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES, THE GOVERNMENT HAS CONTINUED TO ENCOURAGE THE ESTABLISHMENT AND GROWTH OF PRIVATE INSTITUTES OF HIGHER LEARNING. IN 1986, WHEN I WAS THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION, THERE WERE LESS THAN 50 PRIVATE INSTITUTES OF HIGHER LEARNING, BUT TODAY THIS NUMBER HAS INCREASED MORE THAN TEN-FOLD TO 539. THE RAPID GROWTH OF THE PRIVATE EDUCATION SECTOR HAS ALLOWED LOCAL STUDENTS TO OBTAIN HIGH QUALITY EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA WITHOUT BEING BURDENED BY THE TREMENDOUS FINANCIAL COSTS OF PURSUING EQUIVALENT COURSES ABROAD. FOREIGN STUDENTS HAVE ALSO FOUND MALAYSIA TO BE AN ATTRACTIVE ALTERNATIVE DESTINATION FOR PURSUING THEIR TERTIARY EDUCATION. CURRENTLY, THERE ARE AS MANY AS 39,577 FOREIGN STUDENTS IN MALAYSIA AND THIS NUMBER IS EXPECTED TO GROW TO 50,000 BY 2010. WHAT BEGAN AS AN INITIATIVE TO CATER TO AN INCREASING DEMAND FOR HIGHER EDUCATION HAS IN FACT BECOME A SUCCESS STORY IN ITS OWN RIGHT.

11. ENCOURAGED BY THIS ACCOMPLISHMENT, THE GOVERNMENT IS SEEKING TO DEVELOP MALAYSIA INTO A REGIONAL CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION. IN ORDER TO DO THIS, WE MUST ENSURE THAT WE DO NOT COMPROMISE ON THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION THAT WE DELIVER. MY GOVERNMENT IS FULLY COMMITTED TO ENSURING THAT THE EDUCATION SERVICES BEING OFFERED AT ALL INSTITUTES OF HIGHER LEARNING, INCLUDING BY THE PRIVATE SECTOR, ARE OF THE HIGHEST STANDARD. IN THE RECENT BUDGET, I ANNOUNCED TAX INCENTIVES TO ENCOURAGE PRIVATE INSTITUTES OF

HIGHER LEARNING TO FOSTER SMART PARTNERSHIPS WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS AND/OR MERGE TOGETHER TO CREATE STRONG EDUCATIONAL ENTITIES AT PAR WITH WORLD-RENOWNED UNIVERSITIES. WE SHOULD NOT SPREAD OUR RESOURCES TOO THIN; WE NEED TO EMPHASISE QUALITY, AND MOVE BEYOND MERE QUANTITY.

12. FURTHERMORE, I BELIEVE THE EDUCATION SECTOR IN MALAYSIA SHOULD DEVELOP MORE COLLABORATIVE LINKS WITH REPUTABLE FOREIGN UNIVERSITIES. THIS WILL ADD TO MALAYSIA'S ATTRACTIVENESS AS A REGIONAL HUB FOR EDUCATION. THESE LINKS CAN BE REALISED EITHER THROUGH DEVELOPING MORE TWINNING PROGRAMMES OR BY INVITING MORE TOP-NOTCH FOREIGN UNIVERSITIES TO SET UP BRANCH CAMPUSES IN MALAYSIA. CURRENTLY, UP TO 2 BILLION RINGGIT FLOW OUT OF THE COUNTRY ANNUALLY WHEN MALAYSIAN STUDENTS STUDY ABROAD. WITH MORE FOREIGN UNIVERSITIES SETTING UP BASE HERE, THE GOVERNMENT AND MALAYSIAN PARENTS WOULD NOT HAVE TO BEAR SUCH HIGH COSTS IN FUNDING EDUCATION OVERSEAS. MORE FOREIGNERS WILL ALSO MAKE THEIR WAY TO MALAYSIA AS IT WILL BE MUCH CHEAPER TO STUDY THE SAME COURSE HERE THAN IN DEVELOPED COUNTRIES. ADDITIONALLY, THERE WOULD BE A POSITIVE SPILLOVER EFFECT WHEN LOCAL INSTITUTIONS ARE EXPOSED TO WORLD-CLASS TEACHING, RESEARCH, AND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES.

13. AS A FURTHER MEASURE TO RAISE THE STANDARD OF LOCAL HIGHER EDUCATION, I HAVE DIRECTED THE MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION TO DEVELOP A SYSTEM OF RANKING MALAYSIA'S INSTITUTES OF HIGHER LEARNING, BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE. IT IS HOPED THAT BY RANKING THEM, HEALTHY COMPETITION BETWEEN THE INSTITUTIONS WOULD BE FOSTERED, THEREBY MOTIVATING THEM TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND RESEARCH CONDUCTED. I LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING THE INFORMATION ON RANKING OF PUBLIC HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTES BECOMING AVAILABLE SOON.

14. IN RECOGNITION OF THE DIVERSITY IN PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS, AND IN ORDER TO CARRY OUT THE RANKING EXERCISE MORE EFFECTIVELY, I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO SEE PRIVATE EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS BEING GRADED INTO APPROPRIATE CATEGORIES BASED ON SPECIFIC AND TRANSPARENT CRITERIA. I HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT THIS COULD INCLUDE CATEGORIES SUCH AS UNIVERSITIES AND UNIVERSITY COLLEGES; TECHNICAL COLLEGES; TECHNICAL TRAINING CENTRES; AND TUITION CENTRES. THIS INITIATIVE WOULD FACILITATE THE MONITORING OF THE QUALITY AND INTEGRITY OF SUCH INSTITUTIONS AND THE APPROVAL OF COURSES. FURTHERMORE, THE GRADING WILL MOTIVATE THE INSTITUTIONS TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND RESEARCH IN ORDER TO GAIN PROMOTION TO A HIGHER CATEGORY.

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15. ONCE AGAIN, I WOULD LIKE TO CONGRATULATE LIMKOKWING UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF CREATIVE TECHNOLOGY ON THE SUCCESSFUL ESTABLISHMENT OF ITS

NEW CAMPUS. IT IS MY SINCERE HOPE THAT LIMKOKWING UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, ALONG WITH THE MALAYSIA DESIGN AND INNOVATION CENTRE, WILL WORK CLOSELY WITH THE GOVERNMENT TO REALISE OUR COMMON OBJECTIVES OF DEVELOPING A DYNAMIC AND TALENTED POOL OF GRADUATES TO STRENGTHEN OUR HUMAN CAPITAL, AND OF PROMOTING MALAYSIA AS A PREMIER DESTINATION FOR QUALITY EDUCATION IN THE WORLD.

16. ON THAT NOTE, I HAVE GREAT PLEASURE IN DECLARING OPEN THE LIMKOKWING UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF CREATIVE TECHNOLOGY AND THE MALAYSIA DESIGN AND INNOVATION CENTRE.

THANK YOU.