

**SPEECH BY  
YAB DATO' SERI ABDULLAH BIN HAJI AHMAD BADAWI  
AT THE AGA KHAN AWARD FOR ARCHITECTURE  
AT PETRONAS PHILHARMONIC HALL, KLCC  
4 SEPTEMBER 2007**

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BISMILLAHIR RAHMAN NIRRAHIM

ASSALAMUALAIKUM WAROHMATULLAHI WABARAKATUH AND GOOD EVENING,

HIS HIGHNESS THE AGA KHAN,  
FOUNDER AND CHAIRMAN OF THE AGA KHAN DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

HONORABLE MINISTERS, EXCELLENCIES, EMINENT SCHOLARS,

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

WE ARE PARTICULARLY HONORED BY THE PRESENCE OF HIS HIGHNESS THE AGA KHAN, WHO IS VERY WELL KNOWN FOR THE VARIOUS DIMENSIONS OF HIS WORK IN HELPING TO EMPOWER COMMUNITIES AND INDIVIDUALS THE WORLD OVER, OFTEN IN DISADVANTAGED CIRCUMSTANCES WITHOUT PREJUDICE TO NATIONALITY, GENDER OR RELIGION.

2. I AM VERY PLEASED THAT THE AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE HAS BROUGHT TO MALAYSIA THIS YEAR'S AGA KHAN AWARD FOR ARCHITECTURE. LET ME FIRST BID A VERY WARM WELCOME TO MALAYSIA TO ALL OF YOU WHO HAVE COME FROM ABROAD SPECIALLY TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS EVENT.

3. THIS IS INDEED A VERY MOMENTOUS OCCASION BECAUSE THIS YEAR IS THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ASSUMPTION OF OFFICE BY HIS HIGHNESS THE AGA KHAN AS IMAM OF THE SHIA ISMAILI MUSLIMS. AND FOR US IN MALAYSIA, THIS IS ALSO A PERIOD OF CELEBRATION BECAUSE ONLY A FEW DAYS AGO, WE CELEBRATED THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE COUNTRY'S INDEPENDENCE ON 31ST AUGUST 2007.

4. WE ARE VERY PROUD THAT THIS PHILHARMONIC HALL OF THE PETRONAS TWIN TOWERS HAS BEEN CHOSEN AS THE VENUE FOR THIS YEAR'S AWARD CEREMONY. IT HAS NOW JOINED THE RANKS OF OTHER HISTORIC SETTINGS OF PAST AWARDS, WHICH WERE SELECTED FOR THEIR IMPORTANCE TO ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE. I BELIEVE THE SELECTION OF THE TWIN TOWERS HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE AGA KHAN AWARD FOR ARCHITECTURE, WHICH HAS BEEN EXPRESSED BY HIS HIGHNESS THE AGA KHAN, IN HIS OWN WORDS, AS PROTECTING THE PAST AND INSPIRING THE FUTURE. IF THE CONCEPT AND DESIGN OF THE TWIN TOWERS IS AN INSPIRATION FOR THE FUTURE, WE DO THANK THE MASTER JURY FOR SELECTING THIS PRIDE OF MALAYSIA AS ONE OF THE WINNERS OF THE AWARDS IN 2004.

5. IN FACT, OTHER MALAYSIAN ARCHITECTURAL EXPRESSIONS HAVE ALSO WON AWARDS IN 1983, 1995, 1998 AND 2001. THEREFORE, MALAYSIA'S ASSOCIATION WITH THE AGA KHAN AWARD FOR ARCHITECTURE IS NOT NEW. ON THIS OCCASION, HOWEVER, LET ME CONGRATULATE IN ADVANCE THE WINNERS WHO SHALL BE RECEIVING THEIR AWARDS TONIGHT.

6. AT THE SAME TIME, LET ME CONGRATULATE HIS HIGHNESS, AS HEAD OF THE AGA KHAN FOUNDATION, ON HIS SUCCESSES IN BUILDING BRIDGES OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN ISLAM AND THE NON ISLAMIC WORLD, INCLUDING THE FRATERNITY AMONG BUILDERS, ARCHITECTS AND PLANNERS ON BOTH SIDES. HIS DEDICATION TO ARCHITECTURE FOR THE LAST THREE DECADES IS ONE SHINING EXAMPLE OF HIS COMMITMENT TO PROMOTING GOODWILL BETWEEN PEOPLES AND CULTURES.

7. I MUST NOT FAIL TO MENTION AS WELL THAT AS HEAD OF THE AGA KHAN NETWORK FOR DEVELOPMENT, HIS HIGHNESS HAS ALSO DONE GREAT DEEDS TO BRING DEVELOPMENT TO MANY POOR COUNTRIES AND SOCIETIES ESPECIALLY IN ASIA AND AFRICA. LAST JUNE, FOR EXAMPLE, I HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF TAKING PART IN AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE TO DISCUSS ISSUES OF DEVELOPMENT FOR AFGHANISTAN. IT WAS THE AGA KHAN NETWORK FOR DEVELOPMENT, TOGETHER WITH OTHER INTERNATIONAL SPONSORS, WHICH WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN CONVENING THAT CONFERENCE IN KABUL.

8. TONIGHT, HOWEVER, LET US FOCUS ON ARCHITECTURE AND THE AWARDS WHICH ARE MEANT TO RECOGNIZE EXAMPLES OF ARCHITECTURAL EXCELLENCE THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, ESPECIALLY THE ISLAMIC WORLD. WE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT THE AGA KHAN AWARD FOR ARCHITECTURE HAS ALSO INSPIRED THE GROWTH OF A NEW GENERATION OF ARCHITECTS WHO ARE KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGIES AND SOLUTIONS WHILE BEING SENSITIVE TO THE CULTURAL DIVERSITIES AND VALUE SYSTEMS AS THEY EXIST IN THE WORLD. IT HAS INCULCATED IN THEM A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR SERVICE TO MANKIND IN THEIR GIVEN ENVIRONMENT. THEREFORE THE SELECTION PROCESS FOR THE AWARDS, I HAVE BEEN INFORMED, EMPHASIZES ARCHITECTURE THAT NOT ONLY PROVIDES FOR PEOPLE'S PHYSICAL, SOCIAL, AND ECONOMIC NEEDS, BUT THAT WHICH ALSO STIMULATES AND RESPONDS TO THEIR CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL EXPECTATIONS.

9. INDEED, ALL OF US HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY, AND A STAKE, IN CREATING AWARENESS AMONG TOWN PLANNERS, DEVELOPERS, ARCHITECTS, ADMINISTRATORS AND FINAL USERS NOT TO ALLOW THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT TO DOMINATE SPACE AT THE COST OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT. MAN-MADE STRUCTURES AND BUILDINGS MUST BE BUILT TO HARMONIZE WITH AND COMPLEMENT THE ENVIRONMENT, BESIDES MEETING THE NEEDS OF THEIR END USERS. ABOVE ALL, PLANNERS AND BUILDERS MUST TAKE CARE NOT TO ENCROACH UPON THE CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL SENSITIVITIES OF THE PEOPLE WHEREVER THEY LIVE.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

10. THE NEED FOR PROPER AND BALANCED DEVELOPMENT IS A TRUISM WHICH MUST NEVER BE SACRIFICED. WE IN MALAYSIA CAN BE JUSTIFIABLY PROUD OF OUR SUCCESS STORY OF RELOCATING THE COUNTRY'S ADMINISTRATIVE CAPITAL FROM KUALA LUMPUR TO PUTRAJAYA AS AN EMBODIMENT OF OUR COMMITMENT TO PROPER AND BALANCED DEVELOPMENT. THE RELOCATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIVITIES TO PUTRAJAYA HAS INDEED SAVED KUALA LUMPUR FROM BECOMING ANOTHER CONCRETE JUNGLE. SUCH HAS BEEN THE FATE OF MANY CAPITAL CITIES IN THE WORLD WHICH HAVE SUCCEDED TO THE URGENT DICTATES TO EXPAND INFRASTRUCTURE TO CATER TO THOSE LIVING AND WORKING IN ESTABLISHED CITIES AND URBAN CENTERS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

11. WE ARE EQUALLY CONSCIOUS OF THE NEED TO SPREAD COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES AND GROWTH CENTERS, AND NOT CONFINE THEM TO CERTAIN CITIES OR ONLY TO CERTAIN AREAS OF THE COUNTRY. THIS IS FURTHERMORE CONSISTENT WITH OUR DESIRE TO ENSURE THAT THE FRUITS OF DEVELOPMENT COULD BE ENJOYED BY ALL MALAYSIANS AS WIDELY AS POSSIBLE. THIS IS THE INSPIRATION THAT HAS LED THE MALAYSIAN GOVERNMENT TO LAUNCH THE "ISKANDAR DEVELOPMENT REGION" IN THE SOUTHERN PART OF THE COUNTRY AND THE "NORTHERN CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT REGION" IN THE NORTH. VERY SOON, WE SHALL FURTHER LAUNCH THE "EASTERN CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT REGION" TO COVER THE STATES IN THE EAST OF PENINSULA MALAYSIA. WE ARE DETERMINED TO BRING PROGRESS AND DEVELOPMENT TO THE LESS DEVELOPED PARTS OF MALAYSIA. BUT WE ARE EQUALLY DETERMINED TO BRING MODERNITY WITHOUT SPOILING THE NATURAL BEAUTY OF OUR COUNTRY OR DISRUPTING THE ECO-SYSTEM AND THE LIVES OF THE PEOPLE.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

12. WE ARE AWARE THAT NEW DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES LIE AHEAD OF US. HOWEVER, WE SHALL NOT VIEW THESE CHALLENGES AS AN IMPEDIMENT BUT AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR US TO BE CREATIVE AND INNOVATIVE. AND, AS I HAVE REPEATEDLY SAID TO MY FELLOW MALAYSIANS, THE SECRET TO OUR FUTURE SUCCESS LIES IN THE QUALITY OF OUR PEOPLE. THEY MUST POSSESS HIGH INTELLECTUAL CAPACITIES AND STRONG MORAL VALUES. THAT IS WHY WE PLACE SO MUCH EMPHASIS AND WISH TO PUT A LOT OF INVESTMENT IN DEVELOPING THE HUMAN CAPITAL OF MALAYSIA. GOD WILLING, WE SHALL SUCCEED.

YOUR HIGHNESS, EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

13. BEFORE I CONCLUDE, I WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE AGA KHAN ORGANIZATION, ONCE AGAIN, FOR BRINGING TO MALAYSIA THIS YEAR, THE CEREMONIES FOR THE AGA KHAN AWARD FOR ARCHITECTURE. I WISH ALL THE WINNERS FURTHER SUCCESSES IN THEIR FUTURE ENDEAVORS, AND THAT THEY CONTINUE TO CONTRIBUTE TO FURTHER ADVANCEMENTS IN THE REALM OF ARCHITECTURE, AS WELL AS WORLD PEACE AND PROSPERITY. I THANK YOU.