

**SPEECH BY THE HON TUN DR MAHATHIR BIN MOHAMAD
AT THE INAUGURAL CONVOCATION OF UNIVERSITY TUNKU ABDUL
RAHMAN AT WISMA MCA, KUALA LUMPUR
ON SUNDAY, 28 AUGUST 2005**

1. Terlebih dahulu saya ucapkan terima kasih kerana sudi pihak Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman menganugerahkan Ijazah Doktor Sains Kehormat kepada saya serta menjemput saya sebagai tetamu khas ke Konvokesyen Pertama bagi Universiti ini.
2. Buat permulaan ingin saya ucap tahniah kepada graduan-graduan kumpulan pertama dari Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman. Saudara-saudari, tuantuan dan puan-puan menempa sejarah pada hari ini, hari yang menanda permulaan yang cemerlang bagi institusi pelajaran tinggi yang unik ini, unik kerana hanya di Malaysia sahaja yang kita dapati insitusi seperti ini.
3. Malaysia is your country. Malaysia is my country. Malaysia is our country. What it is today is due to our efforts. What it will be tomorrow, a decade after, a century after will be because of us, our efforts. We know what happened during the 450 years of our being under foreign rule.
4. No one can deny that independent Malaysia is a success story. When we became independent 48 years ago there was considerable doubt that we would survive even. Certainly no one thought we would develop and prosper.
5. When in 1969 race riots broke out in Kuala Lumpur the doom-sayers were jubilant. They had predicted it and it had happened. It was the end of Malaysia. This country would join the ranks of what is now termed "failed states".
6. But we overcame all the obstacles. We achieved peace and stability. And we developed ourselves by our own efforts until Malaysia is now held up as a model for other developing countries. Even developed countries see there is something they can learn from Malaysia.
7. It had not been easy. It had not been easy because Malaysia truly is a multi-racial country and multi-racial countries usually cannot remain stable enough to develop. There would be tensions, conflicts and outbreaks of racial violence. Off and on the country would literally go up in flames.
8. It did once in Malaysia but it has not been repeated. Since 1969 this country has not seen racial riots and violence of any significance. We, you and I, must be grateful. Above all we must be grateful to one person, the founding father of our nation, after whom you have chosen to name your university.

9. It was Tunku Abdul Rahman who brought the two major races together, to overcome their suspicions and dislike for each other, to cement them together so as to cooperate for the good of both and for the greatness of this nation.

10. I repeat, it was not easy. Attempts to bring the races together into one party had failed. The Malays and the Chinese were not about to submerge their differing racial origins in a party that identified itself as purely Malaysian. Thus the Independence of Malaya Party failed. The Labour Party failed. The Socialist Front failed.

11. It was and it is the coalition of racial parties which succeeded. The racial identities remain but they are pragmatic enough to appreciate the need to cooperate for the common good. And so the Alliance and then the National Front have continuously received strong support from the people of all races in Malaysia. Still it must be admitted that all the races, over the years have learnt to respect each other and to absorb the cultures of the components making up Malaysia's multiethnic society. Their dresses and their food have achieved a degree of fusion which reflects their changed mindset. They are Malaysians, as distinct from the peoples of the countries they came or originate from.

12. But the Tunku created a coalition of racial parties, so that they could work together without losing their identity. This was the success formula of the Tunku. We must all be grateful to him. That is why naming this university after him is very appropriate for the peaceful Malaysia of today is possible because of him.

13. But I am sure you all will agree with me that it is not enough to name this university after him. We must also subscribe to his creed, his firm belief that we can together build a united country, a distinctive country where the local culture and language, albeit diluted by the culture of the countries of origin define and distinguish us. I am told that Malaysian Chinese living in China miss Malaysian Chinese food. They find China's Chinese food too bland. Similarly the Malays and Indians, Ibans and Kadazans, Muruts and Bajaus and the others are adept at using the chopsticks as the Chinese.

14. Kita juga faham dan dapat bertuturkata dalam Bahasa Melayu yang menjadi Bahasa Kebangsaan. Adat resam juga mencerminkan penerapan sedikit sebanyak adat Melayu. Semua bangsa di Malaysia, apabila berjalan di hadapan orang yang lebih tua atau lebih kanan, akan membongkok sedikit sebagai tanda penghormatan. Dan ramai yang apabila bersalam akan meletakkan tangan di dada kiri mengikut cara orang Melayu. Dengan itu semua amalan ini menjadi cara Malaysia.

15. Apabila kita berada di luar negara kita gembira apabila berjumpa dengan lain-lain rakyat Malaysia tidak kira dari apa kaum. Kita juga berbangga memberitahu orang asing bahawa kita adalah dari Malaysia.

16. Kita belum lagi dapat mencipta Bangsa Malaysia yang tulen. Sudah tentu bangsa Malaysia akan mencerminkan sifat dan budaya ketiga-tiga bangsa, disamping unsur-unsur budaya suku-suku kaum di Sabah dan Sarawak. Proses ini akan memakan masa tetapi ia boleh dicapai dengan lebih cepat jika usaha dibuat ke arahnya.

17. Malangnya harapan kita bahawa semua anak-anak kita akan bercampur gaul semasa persekolahan tidak menjadi kenyataan. Dahulu mereka bersekolah bersama di sekolah aliran Inggeris. Tiada siapa yang berasa sangsi yang ia akan menghapuskan kaum kita. Sejak sekolah Inggeris dijadikan sekolah kebangsaan, ramai penuntut Cina memilih untuk ke sekolah Cina. Dengan itu murid-murid di sekolah tidak dapat bercampur lagi. Demikianlah terpisahnya anak-anak kita sehingga kita terpaksa adakan latihan Khidmat Negara untuk merapatkan pergaulan mereka.

18. Di universiti milik negara juga penuntut kurang bercampur. Walaupun Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman sanggup menerima penuntut dari berbagai kaum tetapi amat kurang sekali penuntut Melayu dan bumiputra lain dan penuntut keturunan India di Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman ini.

19. Keadaan ini tidak menyumbang kepada pergaulan kuat di peringkat universiti dan kurang sihat bagi masa depan negara kita. Kerajaan boleh berusaha tetapi rakyat dari semua keturunan hendaklah sertai program-program untuk merapatkan lagi rakyat, terutama semasa berada di universiti.

20. Negara tidak menafi sumbangan keturunan kaum Cina dalam pembangunan negara. The Chinese in Malaysia are very dynamic. They have been able to keep up with the trends in business and technologies successfully. Today there are more genuine partnerships in business between them and the other races. We now see many Chinese-owned businesses employing Malays and Indians in their executive ranks and Malay businesses employing Chinese and Indians staff. Many visitors have remarked that racial cooperation in Malaysia works. But we need to see more of this.

21. We live in a very competitive world. While we need to carry out the affirmative action to reduce the disparities between the different races, we also need to reduce the disparities in our development with those of the developed countries. That is why in education we have to emphasise merit. People who have been given the opportunities to improve themselves must seriously make the effort. If they don't make serious effort it would be unfair to deprive others of the opportunities.

22. There are today quite a number of non-Chinese children, especially Malay going to Chinese schools. This is not undesirable. But we must find out why

they are doing this. Is it because they want to learn Chinese or is it because they think Chinese schools are better than National schools. If it is the latter, and many believe it is the latter, then we should look seriously at the national schools. Is it true that national school teachers are over burdened. Let us do a scientific study, comparing the Chinese schools with the national schools and find the true reasons. Physically the national schools of today are better equipped and are housed in better buildings than in the past. Often they have the best buildings in the villages. If it is not the physical quality of the schools then we must look elsewhere for the reasons why Malay parents choose to send their children to Chinese schools.

23. Malaysia and Malaysians value education highly. We spend a very substantial portion of our national budget on education. And parents also spend a lot of money on the education of their children. It is a good investment for the nation and the parents.

24. Many foreigners have asked how an agricultural country like Malaysia can industrialise so quickly. Certainly one of the contributory factors is the high literacy rate and the access to higher education for our people. There are more scholarships in Malaysia than in any other developing country. Poverty is no obstacle to education here, for good students will always get sufficient support.

25. But education must suit the time. In the old days the arts were important. But today science and technology are absolutely essential for the industries which will help develop the nation. This have been taken note of by the Government, the parents and the students.

26. We admit that there is a need for mastery of the arts, especially literature. We need some dreamers and poets to give meaning to our lives. We need the people who can interpret life and beauty so that we can appreciate them more.

27. Life is not just about making money and economic progress. It is not just about palatial homes and luxury limousines. If these are the only things we care for in life then we will all become very greedy and culturally backward. A society of greedy people will not be the most pleasant society to live in.

28. We need people who think of the meaning of life, who value the spiritual and not just the material.

29. So the beauty of literature, of poetry, of music and songs, of the natural environment which surrounds us must be appreciated, studied and written about so that we may satisfy the higher senses. But we must not be carried away by an excess of the spiritual. We have to acknowledge that today's world is materialistic and competitive and needs the skills and knowledge of the sciences,

higher mathematics and technology in order to survive, to enrich and to protect the freedom that we cherish, indeed in order to protect the spiritual values.

30. And so more of us must study these scientific subjects, must master them and learn about their applications. Whereas we were not free during the Industrial Revolution when science was first applied to improve the quality of life and to develop and prosper the ethnic European societies, today we are fortunate that with the new technologies, Information Technology for example, we have the opportunity to enter and participate in their development and application at the same time as the rest of the world. Instead of being the recipient and the consumers of the products of new technologies we can actually be the inventors and innovators, producing state-of-the-art products for the world. We can now be at the cutting edge, with ideas and products which anticipate the future. All these are entirely possible for Malaysians are in no way inferior to the people of the rest of the world.

31. We have a cultural advantage too. We are keen to develop and improve the quality of our lives. Our competitors in the developed countries feel so confident that they would never be overtaken that they are less willing to work hard, to strive, to overcome challenges. Like the tortoise and the rabbit, we may catch up and overtake our competitors.

32. There is one aspect of our cultural values which we need to develop – and that is a strong sense of curiosity and the need to prove that what we find out through research can be developed.

33. Malaysian scientists must develop that curiosity which would propel us to discover new things. We know how children are quicker at the computer than adults. The children are not held back by a mindset that believes certain things are impossible. They use the computer confidently because they think and they believe the computer can do what they want it to do.

34. But adults believe that certain things like locating informations from a vast store of data just cannot be done. Calculating at lightning speed is impossible. Reaching across vast spaces without any visible connection, accurately in nano-seconds just cannot be done.

35. Because of this lack of faith in the microchip our application of this miracle circuitry is limited. It began with accurate mathematical calculations in split seconds which ordinarily would require days and weeks if done normally. But because there are people who believe in the impossible, in the ability to translate digital information into recognisable signals and symbols, we now see coloured moving sound pictures being recorded on basically the same chip which record simple binary numbers.

36. Thus when you think of the ways to apply a simple notion, you can come up with hundreds of thousands of complex products which are miracles in themselves.

37. We have decided to seriously study English and use it for teaching sciences and mathematics. It is not that we are less nationalistic or we think our languages are inadequate for these subjects. It is simply because most of the new knowledge is available in English. It is not possible to translate all the research papers into our languages in time. We do not have the manpower either. By understanding English we can access any new knowledge immediately and so keep abreast with the rest of the world.

38. But these are only possible if you think all the time about the application of technology. Not many Malaysian have the mindset which would make them look for new applications of available knowledge. We have to change our attitudes. We must constantly /be thinking about applications and new applications of the knowledge of the inventors of things.

39. A university is not just for acquiring knowledge but it is also for the discovery and development of new knowledge. Accordingly every university must provide sufficient funds and equipment for research and development.

40. This is something that your university, University Tunku Abdul Rahman must provide for. There must be good laboratories equipped with all the latest research equipments to enable the academic staff to do research even as they teach. Indeed one of the things that must be taught the students is the technique of research. Where possible they should participate in these research projects.

41. The Chinese community places a high premium on education, more so perhaps than the other communities. And wealthy Chinese have always been willing to finance education. It is time that they finance research projects by providing funds for special laboratories and research work. I believe their charity will be amply repaid.

42. Today the first graduates of this University will be getting their degrees. We hear a lot about unemployed graduates. But I am sure the diligent among you will find the future bright.

43. Malaysia, your country is a great country. It has given you a good life. The education resulting from the wealth that is made in this country has helped you to climb the ladder of scholastic and economic success. I am sure you feel grateful for everything that has contributed to your education. I am quite sure you will not forget that there will be others who will come after you who need the same opportunities to get an education for the betterment of their future. You will

no doubt return the good deed by doing the same for those following in your footsteps.

44. I am doubly honoured that University Tunku Abdul Rahman, should not only make me your guest of honour on this memorable occasion of your inaugural convocation, but you have also conferred on me the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Science. It is gratifying to me that you should choose a doctorate in science for me, a subject close to my heart.

45. Sekali lagi ingin saya ucap berbanyak terima kasih kepada Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman serta pengurusannya kerana sudi menganugerahkan Ijazah Doktor Sains Kehormat kepada diri saya.

46. Saya juga ingin ucap tahniah kepada graduan-graduan yang akan menerima ijazah-ijazah pada hari ini. Saya harap mereka akan berjaya dalam karier mereka.