

**ACCEPTANCE SPEECH BY TUN DR MAHATHIR BIN MOHAMAD  
AT THE CONFERMENT OF THE HONORARY DOCTORATE DEGREE  
IN POLITICAL SCIENCE FROM NARESUAN UNIVERSITY  
ON FRIDAY, 27 JANUARY 2012**

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1. At the outset, allow me to express my sincere appreciation to Naresuan University for conferring on me an Honorary Doctorate in Political Science. It is indeed a great honour for me as I believe it reflects Naresuan University's recognition on my contribution to the development of Malaysia and good relations with Thailand during the time when I was the Prime Minister of Malaysia from 1981 until I retired in 2003. For this, I am very grateful to Naresuan University and on my part, I accept this honorary doctorate degree with both pride and humility.

2. I am very proud to be associated with this prestigious and outstanding institution which in recent years under the able leadership of Prof. Krasae and Prof. Suhjin has strived to develop the university as an outstanding institution which places great emphasis on the maintenance of high academic standards in all of its faculties.

3. Established in 1967 when it was known as the College of Education, it attained full university status in July 1990. I am made to understand that I am the first Malaysian to be conferred with this prestigious award. A relatively young university, Naresuan University has been active in its outreach programme and in its internationalisation programme. In the year 2011, it has decided to extend the award to non-Thais as a form of recognition to the contribution made by eminent personalities. This is an honour I am proud to be associated with.

4. I am delighted to learn that Naresuan University has been collaborating in a number of academic activities with universities in Malaysia and more recently it has established its own Centre for ASEAN Education (CAE) which I truly believe bodes well for the ongoing efforts undertaken by all member States in this region to foster closer relationship in view of the important deadline of 2015 when the 10 countries in this region will become one community.

5. I am also delighted to learn that the university has been working very closely with all ASEAN diplomatic representatives in Thailand to ensure the success of CAE by having the envoys as Honorary Committee members. The university has also appointed representatives from ASEAN Embassies to be members of its Executive Board. The decision could be described as a brave step by the university to steer its ASEANisation efforts further and emerge as one of the leading tertiary institutions in this region by 2017 when it aspires to achieve the status as a research university. I have full confidence in the ability of its top management to realise that objective.

6. The various modes of cooperation and other initiatives undertaken by Naresuan University reflect the universal nature of higher education, and it is definitely a step in the right direction. I would like to commend the University's Council on this effort. The education sector is critical in generating human resource capital required for our development. It makes upwards mobility possible for the poor and disadvantaged. As such, education becomes a powerful tool for development.

7. As a Malaysian and a Muslim, we are taught to value education. In the Holy Qur'an, the first verse that was revealed to Prophet Mohamad (p.b.u.h) was Iqra' which means read. To read is to acquire information and knowledge. Clearly Islam regards knowledge as very important. The Europeans realised that the Islamic civilization was the result of knowledge. Accordingly they studied Arabic in order to access the knowledge stored in the great libraries of Cordoba in Spain and in Baghdad.

8. I am excited to learn that the top management of Naresuan University has the vision and mission to transform this university as the beacon of knowledge and I personally commend the efforts to internationalise the programmes offered at 18 of its faculties including at Naresuan University International College. The much needed paradigm shift has to be implemented to ensure that the institution remains relevant and could meet the demand of the current job market. Strategic partnership with key industrial players needs to be nurtured to increase the rate of graduates' employability upon their graduation. It is inadequate if we produce thousands of graduates each year but a high percentage of them could not find employment as they lack the necessary skills and knowledge to meet the demands of the job market.

9. The culture of lifelong learning needs to be nurtured in the minds and hearts of graduates as we move towards a knowledge-based economy. In today's world, lifelong learning is essential because continuous research leads to new knowledge and discoveries being available. With new knowledge comes innovation, agility and increased productivity that would eventually contribute directly to the nation building process. We have to learn from the examples set by Ibnu Sinna and Al Khawarizmi in the fields of medicine and mathematics respectively and in more recent years, we should emulate the creativity and innovation displayed by Mark Zuckerberg and the late Steve Jobs whose invention and innovative ideas had changed the life of millions of people around the globe directly and indirectly. In this regard, it is clear that education should be used as a vehicle for change, empowerment and emancipation.

10. The challenge now is to embrace good values and continuously develop new skills to meet current and future demands. The advancement of technology has made learning opportunities available to everyone and this new and exciting world promises great opportunities which should be fully optimised. Just as Mark Zuckerberg and Steve Jobs were able through their creative ideas to change the

lifestyle of people, they themselves have reaped the benefits of their own innovations to become billionaires.

11. Thomas Alva Edison who created the light bulb is often credited with the creation of the first industrial research laboratory in the 19th century. He experimented more than a thousand times before he could eventually perfect his creation. But in his own assessment, he did not fail in his experiments for he learnt a thousand wrong ways to create light bulbs. That is truly the spirit that is much needed in this modern time which will without doubt benefit humankind as a whole.

12. Before I end, allow me to once again thank Naresuan University for all the efforts towards realising this event. This is a proud moment that I will long cherish and treasure and again I accept with humility this great honour.

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