

## **IJN JUBILANT JOURNEY DINNER 2018**

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Venue : CONNEXION @ GRAND NEXUS, BANGSAR SOUTH

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1) It is indeed a pleasure to be invited to this dinner, an occasion for all of us to celebrate and reflect on the journey IJN had taken since its establishment in 1992.

2) IJN to me is a manifestation of the “affairs of the heart”, mine included, and since it was established, it had grown from strength to strength, making medical breakthroughs that have established its reputation as a premier heart institution and at the same time making Malaysia proud.

3) I may be accused of bias but it is no secret that I have been its guest on several occasions. I can firmly attest that I had never been disappointed because if it had, I wouldn't be here sharing this stage with you this evening.

4) When I had my first heart attack years ago and after undergoing surgery, I was told by the doctors that I was lucky to be alive as the Kuala Lumpur General Hospital was not fully equipped to handle heart surgery then. This was at a time

when many Malaysians still had to go abroad to receive medical or surgical treatment for heart conditions. All these were the push factors on the need to establish a dedicated heart centre that can attend to the needs of all Malaysians.

5) When we started IJN, the idea was to have an organic, or a home-grown specialist centre that offers the best possible care to Malaysians and at the same time striving for excellence comparable if not better than centres abroad. This was then and the current Government's primary reason to invest in IJN. I am pleased to note that IJN has not only surpassed my expectations but has become an important national asset. This is without doubt, due to the commitment and hard work put in by the IJN specialists and trained staff throughout the years, as well as the supporting non-professional staff.

6) All we need to do is to look at IJN's track record. It has recorded many firsts within the country, region and even on the global stage. The most recent is the implanting of the world's smallest pacemaker, and introducing non-surgical repair for the leaking mitral valve.

7) Since inception, complex cardio-thoracic operations and procedures have become the norm at IJN, affirming its position as a premier heart specialist in this region – if not the world. I have been informed that the centre has now performed some 150,000 cardiology procedures, including 37,000 open heart surgeries and 20,000 paediatric cardiothoracic surgeries over the span of 25 years.

8) Aside from clinical care and breakthroughs, the centre is also a fertile ground for training and education. I was informed that many of the country's top heart surgeons and specialists have either been trained at IJN or have passed through its doors. This has made the centre an important contributor to the sustainability of quality healthcare in Malaysia. The high standard of IJN's training has also drawn doctors from other countries such as Japan and the Middle East – so far, the centre has trained over 200 foreign specialist doctors.

9) On top of that, IJN should also be proud of its research capabilities. I was made to understand that it has taken the lead in seeking out collaborations with local higher learning institutes, as well as renowned international organisations such as Boston Children's Hospital in the United States; the Mt. Fuji Shizuoka Children's Hospital in Japan; Papworth Hospital in the United Kingdom; and the non-governmental organisation Children's HeartLink.

10) In its commitment to innovation, the centre has also a number of industry-sponsored research that will help in the development of new and novel methods of treatment for cardiovascular diseases.

11) I have long been a proponent of the "Malaysia Boleh" spirit; that Malaysians are as capable of scaling the heights of success on par with any of our global peers. For the medical sector, this not only means pioneering new scientific breakthroughs, but also putting Malaysia on the world map as a destination for quality healthcare.

12) Through the efforts of our healthcare providers, I believe that we can be a centre for medical tourism. This can be a major income driver for our economy. In this respect, IJN is an excellent example of being a competitive international player – I believe this has been reflected in the global accolades the centre has received.

13) Just this year alone, I am informed that IJN has earned a staggering number of awards. It was deemed as the “International Specialist Patient Centre of the Year” at the International Medical Travel Journal (IMTJ) Medical Travel Awards 2018. Global Healthcare Travel named IJN as the “Best Cardiology Provider” for the third year running, since 2016. The centre also won the CSR Malaysia Awards, which honours Malaysian corporations that excel in the socio-economic transformation of the country, in 2016 and 2018.

14) Malaysians can take pride in having access to healthcare facilities that are both effective and efficient. This is in no small part due to our dual-track healthcare system, comprising both the public and private sectors. Even so, the public sector will remain the cornerstone of this country’s healthcare. The government is fully committed to continue investing in healthcare to ensure that essential medical services remain accessible.

15) For that, the Government will continue supporting IJN in its efforts to provide quality health care and treatment to all Malaysians regardless of their social status or economic background.

16) On a more personal note, I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the centre for the care they have shown me as a patient. As a trained doctor myself, I believe that medical care is more than just modern infrastructure and technical skills – it is also about providing the human touch of empathy and kindness.

17) For my last bypass in particular, my special thanks goes to Senior Consultant Cardiologist Tan Sri Dr Robaayah Zambahari, Chief Cardiothoracic Surgeon Dato' Sri Dr. Mohd Azhari Yakub, Senior Consultant Anaesthesiologist Datuk Dr Mohamed Hassan Ariff. I must also note the two specialists who are still in charge of my care, namely Senior Consultant Cardiologist Datuk Dr Mohd Nasir Muda and Consultant Cardiologist Datuk Dr Ahmad Khairuddin Mohamed Yusof. Of course, there are too many others that have contributed to my well-being including former heart surgeons of IJN, nurses and support staff who have shown me much kindness and care during my stay at the centre.

18) I believe that my expression of gratitude is also on behalf of the rest of Malaysians – those who had experienced the IJN treatment and those who may not have but comforted by the fact that IJN exists and that they can turn to it when their time of needs arise.

19) Of course, with such accolades and achievements, the burden of sustaining and improving its performance becomes even greater. Expectations too shall keep growing. But given its track record, I have faith that IJN will continue to achieve impressive record and will never disappoint.

20) On that note, I wish to congratulate IJN for its Jubilant Journey over the past 25 years, and I wish you many more years of success in heart care.

Thank You.

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