

**THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES ALUMNI OF MALAYSIA (AUAM) 35TH
ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION GALA DINNER
07/03/2012**

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim.

Assalamu'alaikum warahmatullahi wa barakatuh, Salam Sejahtera dan Salam 1Malaysia.

YBhg. Tan Sri Dato Dr Abdul Aziz Abdul Rahman,
President of American Universities Alumni of Malaysia,

YBhg. Tan Sri Dato' Seri Dr Yahaya Ibrahim,
Advisor to AUAM's 35th Anniversary Celebration,

YBhg. Dato' Simon Wong & Dato' Rajendran,
The Organizing Chairmen of tonight's dinner,

Tan Sri - Tan Sri, Puan Sri - Puan Sri, Dato-Dato, Datin-Datin,

Distinguished Members of American Universities Alumni Malaysia,

Ladies and gentlemen.

1. I am deeply honored to be here with you celebrating AUAM's 35th anniversary. It is with a great sense of satisfaction that I look back to my own university days, remembering toiling on research, term papers and theses. You know how it goes. We all also know the feeling that goes with every successful completion of those tasks.

2. I am pretty sure that you as alumni of American universities have a greater sense of satisfaction having completed those tasks in some top-notch universities in the United States. I myself have always valued that international exposure for our students at all levels – the strength of diversity in our classrooms in Primary and Secondary Schools, in our Institutions of Higher Learning both at home and abroad. International exposure, even for a brief period, enriches one's perspective.

3. As graduates of US Universities, as Fulbright scholar, or having had interactions with Peace Corps Volunteers, or even working closely with the new English Teaching Assistants program, your invaluable exposure bodes well for our Nation's Transformation efforts.

4. This year also marks the 50th year of the US Peace Corps program in Malaysia. Reflecting on these two anniversary celebrations, makes me think about the incredible events that our nation has seen unfold in the last six decades, and of no less importance the continued close relationship with United States of America. I dare say that AUAM has had its share of incredible events over the three and a half decades since its formation. I can boldly say that today, as I look at where our graduates are after those years spent in USA, virtually all have done pretty well through a combination of ability and hard work.

5. The United States has always provided Malaysians with one of the best education available in the world. And in turn you, the beneficiaries of this excellent system, have returned home

as successful professionals to make a strong impact on your nation and its people. I must say that as our country moves into the next stage of social and economic development, we need your experience, skills and expertise to help in our country's transition into a high income developed nation by 2020.

6. Moreover, we now have a greater sense of direction. The government under the good leadership of our Prime Minister, YAB Dato' Seri Mohd Najib Tun Abdul Razak, has set a clear path forward for the nation. We are initiating new and effective ways of transforming the economy and the society, primarily through the implementation of the Government Transformation Program (GTP) and the Economic Transformation Program (ETP). On top of these, we have also rolled out Rural Transformation Program (RTP) to ensure that the fruits of economic prosperity are shared by all segments of our society.

7. Our Government Transformation Program in particular has delivered the desired results. Street crimes were reduced by 37.9 percent since 2009, rail ridership has increased to 15.7 percent since 2010, about 3 million lives in rural areas in Peninsular Malaysia and East Malaysia have had access to basic rural infrastructures of road, clean water and electricity in the last 3 years, 66,995 poor households participated in 1AZAM program and 77,225 children benefited from the setting up of new pre-school classes.

8. On the economic front, the future looks very exciting for us. We are glad that the various initiatives implemented under the Economic Transformation Program produced promising results last year. Our recorded gross national income and private investment were RM 830 billion and RM 94 billion, respectively, against the targeted RM 797 billion and RM 83 billion, respectively. Despite the challenging global economic outlook, foreign direct investment grew by 12.3 percent to RM 32.9 billion last year, and Malaysia achieved total trade of RM1.27 trillion in 2011, the highest total trade ever recorded.

9. We believe that the transformation our country is undergoing now is an evolutionary process. It is evolutionary because all efforts that we put in place now will only bear fruit in the future. Thus the measure of our success is not the amount of efforts that we put in now, but the magnitude of outcome that will result in the future. Of course, we cannot expect success overnight, but I believe if we work hard and smart, and work together as a nation, succeed we surely will.

10. Transforming the nation in an increasingly global economy offers great hope and opportunities for all Malaysians. Those who can harness their full potential and position themselves stand to gain great opportunities and reap tremendous benefits from the miracles of the global economy. How do we do it? No doubt, it is through education.

11. Our strong foundations in providing primary and secondary schooling have rewarded us indeed in preparing our youths to excel in higher education locally and abroad. We are all the products of our education system and we are here today because of the education we received at our younger age.

12. But we also realize that improving the quality of education is a continuous process. We cannot be contented with our great achievements in the past because we what we need to do is to prepare our young generation to face new challenges in the future. This requires us to continuously improve the quality of our education.

13. This is the reason why I recently announced the comprehensive review of our education system. We need to relook at the various aspects of our education and improve on them. We want our education system to produce highly skilled and knowledgeable human capital that will propel our country forward into the next phase of economic development. In realizing this goal, we have to leverage on our existing strengths and learn from the best systems in the world to deliver best results.

14. I believe with the support of over 400,000 teachers, 5 million students and 28 million Malaysians all over the country, we will uplift the standard of our education and make it comparable, if not better than the best education system in the world today.

15. In driving transformation, without a shred of doubt, we will continue to face challenges of striking a right balance of economic and social development, a right balance of embracing globalization and national identity, a right balance of modernization and preservation of our cultural heritage, and challenges of an impatient young generation.

16. In the face of these challenges, the government continues to strive for a balanced holistic education. In doing so, I assure you that we will continue to be guided by the spirit and intent of our National Education Philosophy. We will strive to produce well-rounded individuals who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards and who are able to contribute to the harmony and betterment of the family, the society and the nation at large

Ladies and gentlemen,

17. I am indeed very pleased to learn that AUAM has an ongoing program to reach out and support American style education and training locally by hosting seminars, thereby exposing undergraduates to real-world situations beyond classroom activities. This is one such contribution you, as beneficiaries of American education, can make to help all young Malaysians.

18. Malaysians helping Malaysians! I was told that since 2006 AUAM provided secretariat and other support including mentoring groups of new US graduates and undergraduates in various top-notch US universities to bring to Malaysia student run American Universities Education Fair. Again, an exemplary service by Tan Sri Abdul Aziz and his council members. I commend all of you for your spirit of volunteerism.

19. Yes, volunteerism! Dedicated volunteers make things happen. And tonight, we will be recognizing individuals who, through volunteerism have made selfless sacrifices, demonstrated humanitarian endeavors, and have made significant difference to our nation's wellbeing - the Outstanding American Alumnus Award. Yet, another commendable program from AUAM, I must say.

Ladies and gentlemen,

20. As I look across this hall tonight, I can't help but feel optimistic. Optimistic because I think I share one thing in particular with everyone here. We worked very hard against severe odds, so that our children will inherit a more comfortable future. And in doing so, we move our nation closer to our common vision – Vision 2020.

21. And, that's my message to everyone here tonight. Give our young people the same chance

we had – take on the challenge to set high goals and cherish the experience. You are indeed the government’s partner in National Transformation.

22. I would like to thank Tan Sri Abdul Aziz and his council members for inviting me to this colorful gala dinner tonight. It is my utmost hope that members of the American Universities Alumni Malaysia will continue to contribute selflessly to the betterment of our country.

Thank you.

Wabillahi al-taufiq wal hidayah wassalamu’alaikum warahmatullahi wa barakatuh.