

Full context of the Pro-Chancellor's Speech at the Perdana University' Inaugural Convocation held on 25th September 2016 at the Marriott Putrajaya Hotel

The Honourable Dr Maurice Manning, Chancellor - National University of Ireland,
The Honourable Professor John Hyland, President - Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland,
Your Excellencies, Ambassadors and the High Commissioners,
Yang Berbahagia Datuk Dr Jeyaindran Sinnadurai, Deputy Director General of Health,
Government of Malaysia,
Yang Berbahagia Dato' Syed Ahmad Hussein, Vice Chancellor, Perdana University
Officers of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and Officers of the National University
of Ireland,
Members of Board of Governors & Senate of Perdana University,
Members of the Faculty,
Distinguished Guests who have come from near and afar,
Ladies and Gentleman and most especially those graduating today to whom I offer my
sincerest congratulations.

It is an honour and a great pleasure to share this important occasion with you; to see the pride on the faces of those of you collecting your degrees and awards today. Your presence here to celebrate the end of a long journey of academic learning - an accomplishment mixed with no small measure of relief, I am sure - is indeed a blessing. On an occasion like this, the Chancellor or Pro-Chancellor is traditionally supposed to say encouraging things and offer sage advice for the road ahead, but I wish to dispense with tradition. Partly, the problem is that I like to think I'm still too young to go about offering life lessons and sage advice. I am on my own journey and working all that stuff out for myself; and if I figure it out one day perhaps I'll let you know. In the meantime, I'm not going to patronise you with half-formed wisdom. In any case, as any good teacher knows, it's more powerful to provoke questions than to provide the answers. So, instead today I am going to challenge you.

My first challenge to you is to take what you have learned in your degrees and venture forth with passion, with a drive and determination to use your knowledge and your skills to make a difference – a difference to the lives of every single Malaysian that you come

across, to create together a new era in Malaysian society or in the country that you will return to.

My second challenge to you is to cast wide your horizons; to strive to use the knowledge you have gained here to do all you can to change the world around you for the better. That world, as we know, is changing rapidly: its technology, its climate, its social structure and boundaries. It takes little predictive capacity to know that your generation is now the world's FIRST truly global generation. You are living in an increasingly mobile and permeable world. Make no mistake, the force of globalisation will be the great determinant of your time and your children's time on Earth.

My Third challenge to you therefore is to ensure that you are not bystanders to this change. Think of this: in the year I left secondary school in 1967 at the age of 16; just a very small proportion of school leavers were able to go to our own local university ; yet several decades later, that proportion of graduates and number of universities in Malaysia has increased manifold and is still growing. It is not very difficult to comprehend the speed and enormity of what is going on around us not only in Malaysia but the world over. But it is also impossible NOT to see how these changes will have long lasting consequences for all our lives in decades to come. Education is lifting millions of people in our region to the standards of living and kinds of careers that we expect and enjoy, and it is a massive stimulus to the national and global economy. Just think of the impact that so many millions of intelligent, motivated, aspirational, and educated minds will have on the prospects of humanity.

Even the teaching and learning landscape is being revolutionized through technology. There are so many new subjects like data sciences, biotechnology, biomedical engineering, information technology; digital marketing; advanced research and innovations in so many specialties; nearly every scientific field has reached new dimensions unheard of 10 or 20 years ago. On every single field of endeavour, students who seek have conceivably so many new options to choose from. And therein lies your opportunity. Think of your chance to be part of that; and think of your prospects if you're not.

So now my fourth challenge to you is to help shape this new world that we are all a part of. Make what would have seemed impossible only a few decades ago become possible not only for yourselves but for the country as a whole. Dive deep into whatever specialities ; sub-specialities or professions you choose and do everything you can to help create a Malaysia that will be modern and yet strong, spiritual and united in its diversity.

In 2010, when we initiated discussion with UKAS on the project little did we realise that the journey would be a tough one, saddled with many unpredictable issues. After 5 years and having crossed so many hurdles, I am proud that the first cohort of the various schools are graduating today. My vision for this initiative was to transform lives not merely through change but change that makes lives better and sustaining it. Our University is sensitive to the needs of our society. My Guru – Dr Swami Rama often said that there are 2 types of education. One that teaches us how to make a living and the other - how to live. I hope our teachers in Perdana University have stressed the importance of providing both these components to our students and to those who visit our campus.

Our growth has been slow but steady and in years to come I am certain we will achieve everything we aspire to do. With the Johns Hopkins saga out of the way with the mutual withdrawal of the arbitration proceedings initiated by Johns Hopkins, Perdana University is once again preparing for the intake for the PUGSOM graduate entry programme which is the first of its kind in the country. Our new partners - University California San Diego signed an agreement with Perdana University a week after the departure of Johns Hopkins in 2014. We urge the MMC and MQA to provide the accreditation for the programme which is rightfully long overdue - earnestly and swiftly. I do believe that the policy and decision makers in these agencies are aware of the acute advantage the graduate entry programme has for the country as a whole and the health services in particular. This alternate pathway could help solve the shortage of specialists in the country very quickly as well as reduce the critical housemanship issues the health services is currently faced with. I shall spare the details for now.

My congratulations again to the students and their parents who chose Perdana University. Use this alma mater as a launch pad for your future creative initiatives. And let us also learn from your experiences so that we may pass this knowledge to the next generation. I presume the leadership in Perdana University will now set up a section for the alumni so that you can be closely involved with all the developments in the campus. My aspiration is that this University not only provides you world class education but also provides a career for you. My other hope is that Perdana University will become so well known that students from all over the world will come here to learn and experience Malaysia alongside seeking their professional degrees. During a convocation recently at a University in India in which I am associated with, the Chief Guest who is the President of India stated in his speech: I quote: A university is the apex of the education system. It is incumbent on higher educational institutions to provide quality education to transform the education landscape. The demographic dividend that we talk about will bear fruits if we can provide the growing number of our youth good education, knowledge and skills. Mere expansion of higher education by establishing more centres of higher learning is not the

answer. Unless we take care of quality, the objective of preparing young minds into capable, confident and committed individuals will never be met. Unquote.

Friends, ladies and gentlemen, An all-out effort to maintain good standards in our higher academic institutions is required, be it in developing the faculty, nurturing core competencies, establishing linkages with other institutions, networking with the industry or focusing on research and innovation. The research areas should be prioritized so as to solve specific socioeconomic problems. It is the duty of all our institutions including Perdana University to install in their students a love for their homeland, a sense of responsibility towards their society and a compassion for all irrespective of race and religion.

The higher education system should produce sound professionals with strong social sensitivities instead of learning and leaning towards commercial gains. My speech will not be complete without expressing my gratitude to:

1. YAB Dato' Seri Mohd Najid Bin Tun Abdul Razak -- The Prime Minister of Malaysia - for his unending support.
2. Y A Bhg Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad -- The Founding Chancellor whose term of office ended recently - for his vision and advice.
3. The Government of Malaysia – the Unit Kerjasama Awam Swasta, Jabatan Perdana Menteri (UKAS), Jabatan Perkhidmatan Awam (JPA), Ministry of Education (MOE), Ministry of Health (MOH) and Malaysian Medical Council (MMC) Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) and Malaysian Agriculture Research and Development Institute (MARDI).
4. YBhg Tan Sri Dr Ali Hamsa - Chief Secretary , Government of Malaysia - who was then the first Director-General of UKAS in the Prime Minister's Department who successfully saw to the birth of our project and continues to be a firm pillar of support.
5. YBhg Tan Sri Nor Mohamed Yakcop - Former Minister in the Prime Minister's Department - who helped us create this vision.
6. The RCSI leadership from Dublin comprising of CEO – Prof Cathal Kelly for being a continuous source of strength through his advice and friendship; The Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences – Professor Hannah McGee and The Director of Corporate Strategy - Mr Michael McGrail for their relentless assistance to our team right from the start of our relationship in 2010. And of course Dean Prof David Adams for working hard to ensure the success of the school.
7. The UCSD leadership comprising of Vice Chancellor Professor David Brenner, Assistant Vice Chancellor - Professor Mounir Soliman and the Director of Administration, Ms Maureen Curran who have been thoroughly professional and sincere in helping PUGSOM and its students achieve international standards.

8. The first Vice Chancellor - YBhg Maj Gen Dato' Pahlawan Dr R Mohanadas and his original team who worked tirelessly to set up the University in record time.
9. My colleagues from Academic Medical Centre Sdn Bhd and the Board of Governors who continue to give their energy and resources to ensure the success of the University ; including the past and current leadership and Management of Perdana University led by VC Dato' Syed and the Registrar Puan Norpisah.
10. The members of the Senate, the Deans, Faculty and staff of the various Schools.
11. The parents and especially the students.
12. My thanks and congratulations to the organisers of this first convocation of Perdana University for this milestone in our history.

Now, finally, to all our graduates today, I know I said I would not be giving you any advice, but some habits are difficult to be rid of. I have challenged you to use your learning and spiritual awareness to do all you can to create a better world. But, as you do this, remember at every opportunity to lift your eyes above the horizon and seek out truth in all its forms.

Commit yourselves selflessly to the journey that lies ahead.

Remember that the answers to the future lie in the past and present.

My every good wish for all that comes hereafter and my congratulations again.
Go - pursue your dreams and may all of you succeed in your lives.

Thank you.