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DPM: Reach for the stars

By: (Mon, 05 Nov 2007)

KUALA LUMPUR (Nov 5, 2007): The following is the full text of Deputy Prime Minister cum Umno deputy president Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak's address delivered at the simultaneous opening of the Umno Wanita, Youth and Puteri wings' annual general meeting in the Putra World Trade Centre tonight.

TERJEMAHAN UCAPAN

PERASMIAN SERENTAK PERSIDANGAN PERWAKILAN

WANITA, PEMUDA DAN PUTERI UMNO

PADA 5 NOVEMBER 2007, (ISNIN)

DI DEWAN MERDEKA, PWTC, KUALA LUMPUR

OLEH YAB. DATO' SRI MOHD NAJIB TUN HJ. ABDUL RAZAK

TIMBALAN PRESIDEN UMNO MALAYSIA

REACHING FOR THE STARS:

Elevating A National Civilization

1. Praise be to Allah, for with his blessings, we are once again gathered for this historic assembly here at the Merdeka hall at PWTC.

2. Even now, we can almost hear the lingering cries of Merdeka! Merdeka! Merdeka! Across the country marking the 50th year of our independence last August 31st August 2007. Wanita, Pemuda and Puteri have all come forward resonantly, creating history in conjunction with more than half a century of the building of a national civilization. Our heartiest congratulations to all.

Wanita, Pemuda And Puteri

3. All of you are the wings, and the backbone of UMNO. Wanita, Pemuda and Puteri, each has its own scope of work and targets but the ultimate objective is always the same. The objective is to uphold the sanctity of religion, to defend the race and to build the nation. Our struggles are not confined to the national arena, but rather it stretches the globe. Our success today spans the deepest oceans and the reaches of space.

4. All of you are the frontlines of the party which have been tested in by-elections and in general elections, standing your ground against our opponents. Your intelligence, strength and sense of struggle have helped ensure one victory after another in the course of this journey of ours.

5. All of you are the heirs of our struggle and the new generation who will soon become leaders in their own right. The leadership of UMNO and the supreme council recognizes this – and we will continue to support your ideas and aspirations. Indeed your struggle will be appreciated by your people and god willing, you will always be rewarded with endless blessings.

6. In this year that marks half a century of our independence, this UMNO assembly is itself most historic. 50 years of independence is an important milestone in the journey of a nation. The years gone by reverberate with the footfalls of statesmen and national heroes in their relentless toil to build a civilization.

7. All of you are the bearers of this national civilization that we continue to build to this day. On your young shoulders you bear the burden and responsibility to chart the way forward for the next 50 years beginning from the stroke of midnight, last August 31st. What you do today will echo for another fifty years to come.

Elevating A National Civilization

Distinguished delegates,

8. *Our nation, which has for so long now been rooted in the provinces and on familiar terrain, must begin a process of internationalization and elevation. In fact, in this era of globalisation, it is not even sufficient to merely 'internationalize' the Malays. We must go a step further to elevate them and push them to reach for the stars, to work hard towards fulfilling their dreams. Everything begins with dreaming big, and today we inch ever closer towards making our dreams as a nation, a reality. When we speak of reaching for the stars we are reminded of the Israk Mikraj, the raising of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to the heavens of Sidratul Muntaha. It is a poignant moment in Islamic history, and one that inspires our imagination, to goad us towards going where no man has gone before.*

9. *Today, we all talk excitedly of "Angkasa" or Space. To speak of a "Space Nation" ought to mean so much more than a nation involved in the race to conquer space. A space nation should rightly mean a nation that is elevated and highly evolved; a nation with high aspirations; a nation that is in itself an outstanding civilization. It is our intention to elevate the Malays and Malaysians and to mould this nation into one which consistently and constantly reaches for the stars. And so it is for this reason that I have chosen "Reaching for the Stars – Elevating a National Civilization" as the theme of my address in this historic year. We must explore and excavate the farthest reaches of science and technology, we must enhance ourselves with knowledge and skills, we must master languages and spawn innovation, we must strengthen our faith, we must adopt a culture of excellence and we must keep our aspirations high, as high as the heavens.*

10. *To reach for the stars, is to strive for the highest achievements possible in everything we undertake. It also means to take what we already have in our possession and make it bigger or better; to raise it to the highest levels, to elevate to the realm of pinnacles of achievement. Certainly, reaching for the stars is not about the literal act of going into space, although that in itself is an achievement in science. Rather, it is about daring to dream the impossible dream, and then pursuing it relentlessly. The term "civilization", meanwhile, denotes the state of a human community measured by the level of development and the highly evolved thinking in the social, cultural and economic spheres. It is also measured by their physical and spiritual soundness and well being.*

11. *Speaking of civilizations, I find it very interesting that Ibnu Khaldun, an Islamic scholar, is the first person to have ever conducted a detailed study on civilizations in his book Muqaddimah. It should be noted that this monumental work was completed in the 14th Century, whereas the word "Civilization" was only contemplated in Europe in the 18th Century. At any rate, for us, the civilization we continue to strive for is civilization that combines Malay cultural values and the positive universal values of the East and West. To speak of civilization is to speak of what the Arabs term as Hadarah, or Umrn.*

12. *When we speak of reaching for the stars and elevating our Hadarah or civilization, it is in line with the vision of the President of our party to embrace Islam Hadhari or civilizational Islam. It is our dream that one day in the future, we will have successfully built a civilization of the highest esteem, a point of reference for others and a benchmark of success against which the world will measure itself.*

13. *Looking back on this 50 year journey of nation building and in the 61 years since the birth of UMNO. Reflecting on the patriotic struggle for independence and then subsequently the arduous task of rendering it meaningful, we find that the journey hasn't been all that easy, nor has it been too difficult. Each time we encounter crossroads our leaders have made the right choices. We have never been gluttons for power but rather, we have always placed solidarity in nation building above all else.*

14. *For the next 50 years, the new generation, the successors of the Merdeka generation, will continue the struggle. Like a never ending relay race to a yet undetermined finish line, all leaders hold in our hands batons which we will pass to those who come to take our place when the time comes.*

15. *If we are the ones who stand ready to receive the batons, then the question to ask ourselves is: are we ready to also receive the burden of responsibility that comes with it. The responsibility to continue reaching for the stars?*

Building A Civilization

Ladies and gentlemen,

16. *Building a civilization demands continuous effort. In our history, we have witnessed it before, in the rise of the empire of the Malacca Sultanate. Our region was then known as the center of Muslim Malay civilization. Then came weakness arising from disunity and disintegration and then we were colonized repeatedly for 446 long years before finally winning back our freedom and gaining independence. For the struggle for independence and the subsequent toil to give meaning to it, we owe an eternal debt of gratitude to the great builders of our national civilization: Dato' Onn Jaafar, Tunku Abdul Rahman, Tun Abdul Razak Hussein, Tun Hussein Onn, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad and leaders of all communities. They are the founders of this nation state, The Father Of Independence, The Father Of Development, The Father Of Unity, The Father Of Modernization, builders of this beloved country of ours.*

17. *In the half a century that has gone by, we have seen unprecedented development that forever redefined the landscape of state*

capitals and of Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya. The Petronas Towers, the tallest twin towers in the world, stand proudly to reflect our glory, and the magnificence of Putrajaya is yet another symbol of our civilizational approach in nation building.

Peace, Prosperity and Harmony

An elevated civilization our destiny

Here in our beloved country

Let us contemplate resolutely

The ideals of a struggle, eternally.

18. History tells us that following the rise and fall of the Roman and the Persian civilizations, the Muslim civilization ruled nearly all of the known world for almost 700 years from the 9th century to the 15th. Apart from Makkah and Madinah, Islamic glory was spread out in cities like Baghdad, Cordova, Bukhara, Damascus, Marrakech, Samarkhand, Kufah, Toledo, Isfahan and Grenada. All of these were thriving Centers of Knowledge and Progress, while at that time, the western world was still languishing in the dark ages.

19. However beginning the 15th century the western world awoke and spread its wings across the continents, bringing with it the ideology of Gold, Gospel and Glory. The Malacca Empire fell into the hands of the Portuguese in 1511 and so began an era when ideas of the western civilization were continuously shoved down our throats. Fortunately because of our Islamic faith because of our Malay culture and language, our identity remains intact until today. Later, we also embraced the Chinese and Indians who settled down here, and together we worked hand in hand to build this nation.

Five Thrusts in Elevating A National Civilization

20. To grasp our history is indeed important but even more important is how we manage the present and how we ensure that the future is even more glorious. We should by now be able to envision that glorious civilization to which we aspire. We have glanced at the past to remind us of our successes and our mistakes. Now to move forward we need to have our roadmap and know the milestones. We need good planning and effective implementation to ensure our success.

21. This speech is but a reminder, perhaps a catalyst, towards what has to be a concerted effort involving political will, the machinery of party and government and the support of all our people. A wholesome civilization must comprise the elements of religion, culture, heritage, language, history, arts, science and technology, creativity and innovation, physical structures, knowledge centers, infrastructures in cities, towns and villages and the livelihood of people.

22. Therefore, to my mind, elevating our national civilization to greater heights comprises five main thrusts

- A global people with first class mentality as primary drivers.
- Knowledge and education as core components in nation building.
- Religion and culture as the foundation of civilization.
- Economic growth and equitable distribution as a source of strength.
- And political stability as a pre-requisite.

A Global People With First Class Mentality As Primary Drivers

Ladies and gentlemen,

23. When I spoke to this august assembly in 2005, I called for the creation of global Malays, that is to say Malays with roots firmly established at home, whilst having a global mindset and perspective. We want to excel within our borders and at the same time play a role in the global arena. We remain true to our culture and our faith, yet we are able to hold our own anywhere in any field.

24. In reaching for the stars and elevating our national civilization to greater heights, the global Malays must be able to catapult themselves forward by enhancing their competitiveness at the global level. Globalization is an attitude and a way of thinking that ought to be embraced by all so as to enable us to build a successful nation.

25. *The most essential element of the glocal Malay is the mind. The mind must be sharpened and trained adequately. I therefore spoke of driving the Malay mind when I spoke to you in 2006. A healthy mind is the key to success. If we are to progress, we must maximize the use of our minds to compete on the global stage. Indeed the battles of today and the battles of the future are battles of the mind.*

26. *The Malay mind must therefore be driven towards learning and training in positive, creative, lateral, proactive and innovative thinking. I have repeatedly spoken of the need to alter the Malay mindset through transformational leadership and to work as one team in fulfilling the Malay agenda whilst holding on to our beliefs and cultivating a capable next generation. These are the ingredients to foster a generation of glocal Malays with a first class mentality.*

27. *We have to constantly seek new ideas in light of a new environment and new realities, so that our struggles continue to remain current and relevant. New ideas arise from an evolved mindset that moves with the times, that is creative and innovative in finding new methods for generating change. It is my considered view that apart from economic and political power, the power of the mind is also absolutely critical to ensure the construction of a successful civilization.*

28. *With the glocal spirit and a powerful mind we will chart success after success. Consider a recent example: on October 10, 2007, at exactly 9.21 pm, on the 28th night of Ramadan, the whole country and indeed the Islamic world shared a sense of pride that there was now an Astronaut by the name of Dr. Sheikh Muszhapar Shukor, who soared into space bringing with him Malaysia's glory and becoming the first Malay Muslim ever to spend Ramadan and the Eid in space. You might say that this achievement was a literal manifestation of our aspirations to elevate our civilization and reach for the stars.*

29. *In the mean time, Major Dr. Faiz Khaleed is also worthy of praise for his unwavering support and his qualification as an astronaut in the secondary team. Whatever it is, today The International Space Station (ISS) has become the new catch phrase and buzz word. Such is our accomplishment that even the word 'Angkasawan' is accepted as a term similar to 'Astronaut' and 'Cosmonaut'. This success, in this 50th year of independence shall forever be written in gold, in the folds of our history. And it goes without saying that we will continue to study and explore possibilities in the frontiers of space and aerospace science. This effort is not merely about one man ascending the cosmos. This is about the dreams of one nation reaching for the stars.*

30. *This success also serves as a reminder to us that we, the Malays -we, Malaysians- are able to reach whatever peaks and summits we aspire to. And so here today, at this distinguished and historic gathering we salute our astronauts' success and record our appreciation, our feeling of pride and our thanks to Allah for His blessings. Hopefully this achievement will serve as inspiration and motivation to the younger generation to keep striving to be the best and to carve a name for themselves in whatever field they may choose in life.*

31. *Indeed, when we think about it, in just 48 hours between October 21 and 23, 2007 our nation achieved 3 international milestones. We saw the accomplishment of our space mission and the return of our first Angkasawan; we launched our first state-of-the-art Scorpene submarine named KD Tunku Abdul Rahman in France. And our Minister of Education was successful in his bid to become UNESCO's executive board member, gathering the highest votes in the Asia Pacific region. These are unique symbols of success and historic occasions that serve as proof positive that our aspirations are attainable and are not merely pipe dreams.*

Knowledge And Education As Core Components In Nation Building.

Ladies and gentlemen,

32. *In today's world the focus has shifted from an emphasis on physical capital like real estate, buildings and cash reserves to a more important kind of capital – human capital. For us, what we wish to create is a generation similar to what is described in the Holy Quran in Surah Al-Maidah verse 100 as 'Ulul Al Bab' which means a capable and thinking generation, adept at using their intellect and analytical thinking to grow and prosper.*

33. *This generation is made up of individuals who possess high moral values and good manners, and are steeped in knowledge and understanding of religion and various other disciplines. They are the graduates in various fields. They are the specialist doctors, certified accountants, engineers, architects, lawyers and entrepreneurs. All of them excel in their chosen professions whilst holding steadfastly to their faith and the teachings of Islam. This is what we aim to cultivate.*

34. *The National Strategic Plan For Higher Education and the Education Development Master Plan which were launched this year, dovetail perfectly with this aspiration of ours to foster an 'Ulul Al Bab' generation. A generation having scientific minds and strong religious values. This has been emphasized in the Presidential address at the 2006 UMNO general assembly, where the President spoke of the Ulul Al Bab Community that can rise to the summit of success.*

35. *It must be remembered that the first word of the holy Quran that was revealed to man was 'Iqra' which means 'read'. The broad interpretation of this one word is that it is a commandment to seek knowledge and to embrace lifelong learning in all*

aspects, both worldly knowledge and knowledge of the hereafter. If we, the Malays and the Muslims, are able to understand and embrace the spirit of 'Iqra' which is the call to continuously seek knowledge, success will certainly be ours and we can elevate our civilization to glory.

36. Every year a large number of school leavers enter the job market with nothing more than their SPM certificates. They have no other skills and they do not enroll into institutions of higher learning. We have to reduce these numbers immediately. We have to find these school leavers and give them adequate training suitable to the needs and requirements of industries and potential employers. There must be a concerted effort by all relevant parties to equip our young with adequate skills and give them a second chance.

37. We have already done this with the second generation of FELDA, and today we can see the transformation taking place. We have inculcated in them the philosophy that if the first generation of FELDA was all about opening settlements and land for farming, then the second generation must be about opening minds. In the past 3 years we have seen more than 19,000 individuals from FELDA being given various different kinds of training, including 169 who will soon become aircraft maintenance engineers certified by the Malaysia Airlines Engineering Training Center or MAETC which is also internationally recognized. They are the glocal generation although they come from humble beginnings, far in the provinces and rural areas.

38. Meanwhile, University Technology Mara (UiTM) which has been given the approval to have 200,000 students by 2010 is actively pursuing this target. A new UiTM Campus has been launched in Kuala Pilah whilst the Puncak Alam Campus as well as the medical and dental faculty campus in Sungai Buloh is being constructed. Campuses in Tapah, Bukit Besi and Bertam as well as city campuses in Johor Bahru, Malacca and Kota Baru are also being built. At the same time 22 franchise colleges have commenced operations to complement UiTM's effort to meet the target of enrolling 200,000 students.

39. Another testimony of UMNO's direct contribution to the education of our young is the fact that University Tun Abdul Razak (Unitar) is now fully under the wings of our party. UNITAR, restructured and re-organized in its entirety, will be a university that specializes in entrepreneurship and leadership management. The curriculum is currently being developed with Babson College of the USA, which is the world's number one school in entrepreneurship. This is clear evidence of our unwavering effort to eliminate whatever shortcomings that might be faced by our people.

40. Today there are more than 330,000 students in public universities around the country, and from that figure, more than 180,000 or 60% of every annual intake are female students who will soon become young professionals. Imagine the strength of these young women of various races who will all enter the work force. Imagine the strength of Puteri UMNO and also Pemuda UMNO if all the Malay students one day join the ranks of UMNO to help us reach for the stars and elevate our civilizations. Imagine the joy of the parents of those students on knowing that they have produced a successful generation.

41. We must believe that Malays can progress. We must believe that we can succeed. We can achieve anything and everything good that we hold as our aspiration. The pre-requisite is always knowledge and education. Therefore the most important investment that a Malay family can make is not the procurement of land, property or fancy cars. The utmost priority and the most important investment is the investment in our children's education and ensuring that they get the best and highest level of education possible.

Religion And Culture As The Foundation Of Civilization

Ladies and gentlemen,

42. To uphold the sanctity of Islam in Malaysia is our sacred duty. UMNO is the protector and defender of the faith and we must never falter in upholding this task. For the sake of our religion, we must hold steadfastly to the truth and never abandon our principles. We embrace Islam not merely as a ritualistic faith but rather as an all encompassing way of life as encapsulated by the understanding of Islam Hadhari. And while we do so, we recognize the constitutional rights of other races to practice their religion.

43. The fact of the matter is that Islam is a wholesome and perfect culture and lifestyle that covers every aspect of living. Islam covers the realm of faith (Aqidah), laws (Syariah), morality and conduct (Akhlaq), and also aspects of development. Muslims, by right, should set shining examples for others to emulate, by making history and becoming individuals of distinction, similar to the situation at the height of the Islamic civilization. The closing of the Muslim mind and the pointless polemics about which is more important between worldly knowledge and religious knowledge benefits no one and only serves to weaken us.

44. During the recent exhibition on The Advancement Of Science In Islamic Civilization, held earlier this year in Kuala Lumpur, we saw more than 150 artifacts and replicas of the wondrous inventions and discoveries of early Islamic Scholars. We saw how those inventions and innovations delivered significant paradigm shifts in the fields of Astronomy, Geography, Navigation, Exploration, Medicine, Mathematics, Arts, Architecture and in many other areas.

45. In one Hadith, which is part of the exalted Forty Hadith, the Holy prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said " Whosoever traverses one path to seek knowledge, Allah shall simplify for him one path to paradise... ". Obviously the early scholars of Islam interpreted and embraced this Hadith wholeheartedly, until they were able to generate great accomplishments that contributed to the advancement of mankind.

46. Muslim Intellectual giants have taken their place in history as scientists, inventors and scholars. Ibnu Sina (Avicenna), for example, is forever recognized as a pioneer of scientific medicine. His book, *Al Qanun Fil Tabib (The Canon Of Medicine)* was translated into 15 languages and was used as a text book for hundreds of years in all the world's medical schools. He also wrote studies of more than 760 known afflictions of his time.

47. Al Farabi, meanwhile, was a famous Muslim philosopher and was known as the 2nd Aristotle. Other figures of note are those such as Al Razi who wrote more than 200 works in science, history and philosophy; Al Hazen who was an expert in astronomy, mathematics and geometry; Jabir Ibn Haiyan who was recognized as the father of modern chemistry; Al Zahrawi a pioneering surgeon; Al Khawarizmi , a master of mathematics and astronomy; and Al Ghazali who wrote 300 books and was an Islamic scholar of Tafsir (Quranic interpretations), Tasawwuf (Islamic mysticism) and philosophy.

48. We have much to do to rise to the greatness of those historical figures I mentioned. But if we are lackadaisical, lazy and negligent we will never succeed in doing so. We would not even be able to begin reaching for the stars.

49. What we need to do is to understand the lesson that is contained in the words of Allah as revealed in Surah Ar Rahman verse 33 which says: "O ye assembly of Jinns and men! If it be ye can pass beyond the zones of the heavens and the earth, pass ye! not without authority shall ye be able to pass!". Contemporary interpretations of this verse interpret the word "authority" to mean the power of the mind, the mastery of knowledge, science and technology, the capacity for research and development, material wealth to fund scholarly activities, and behaviour that reflects a propensity for learning, such as the adoption of a culture of precision. From the verse, it is understood that if we work diligently and do everything in our power to master knowledge, then by the grace of Allah, we will have the 'authority' to traverse earth and the heavens.

Economic Growth And Equitable Distribution As A Source Of Strength

Ladies and gentlemen,

50. One undeniable fact is that the Malays have not sufficiently mastered the economy. We must be more actively involved in economic activities so as to ensure that wealth distribution is more equitable. The sharing of power amongst the races in this country should not be limited to the political realm but should also include the sharing of economic power. We have no intention of taking away the rights of others. All we ask for is a bigger share of an economic cake that is obviously expanding. This is part and parcel of what we are doing to reduce the deficits and inadequacies faced by our people.

51. There is a Malay opposition leader who says that the New Economic Policy (NEP) should be rejected because he alleges that it enriches only a handful few Malays. This allegation is entirely baseless as the NEP has been successful in a number of ways, not the least of which in enlarging the Malay middle class. It has also increased the number of Malay accountants, architects, doctors, dentists, veterinarians, engineers, quantity surveyors and lawyers to as many as 42, 414 individuals, which is about 38.8% the total 109,532 professionals in the country, as reported in the 9th Malaysia Plan. This is hardly 'a handful few' and a far cry from the number of Malay professionals in the pre-NEP period which was only 5% of the total or only 225 individuals. How dare the opposition try to deny empirical facts!

52. Apart from those numbers, millions more from among the Malays are direct beneficiaries of the NEP, including those distinguished graduates of some of the best universities. The "Children of the NEP" are more often than not from the small towns and rural areas, who did not come from privileged backgrounds, and many of whom are here in this great hall. One particular Malay individual who now leads a gigantic government-linked conglomerate and runs a multi-billion Ringgit business is a son of a laborer and he is proud to say that he is a "child of the NEP". That being the case, and the evidence being such, let it be known that as long as UMNO lives, we will never relent in struggling for the Malay economic agenda. Indeed this agenda is not only for the benefit of the Malays, but also for the sake of unity for all Malaysians.

53. Malays must become a great race. We have seen that Malays have been able to cross vast oceans, conquer the highest summit and explore the north and south poles. We are now in the midst of attempting extreme expeditions in seven continents, cycling solo around the world, and most recently we have begun exploring space. But beyond all that, Malays must also excel in the mastery of economics; in the arena of international trade and commerce; in competing in a knowledge economy; in innovation and securing patents and intellectual property rights; and in exploring strategic and lucrative ventures. Only then can we become a race of greatness that can build enduring civilizations.

54. On the back of the principle of an equitable distribution of wealth and on the basis of sharing economic power, the government has launched three regional corridors of development. The Iskandar Development Region (IDR), The Northern

Corridor Economic Region (NCER), and the Eastern Corridor Economic Region (ECER) are all very real endeavors and not mere illusions or pipe dreams. Economic Regions in Sabah and Sarawak will also be launched. In a matter of a few years, significant transformations in the landscape of socio-economic development across the country will begin to unfold. It is our desire to see no group excluded from enjoying the fruits of the nation's development.

55. All these five economic regions are the brainchild of the Prime Minister and Party President, aided by all of us, towards developing the country, so that in the end, the civilization that we build will be physically balanced and not centered only in the Klang Valley. What is most important here is our involvement and our readiness to take initiatives and seize the golden opportunities arising from the development of these regions. Let it not be the case that we once again allow this chance of a lifetime to just pass us by without doing anything, without making moves for a quantum leap to empower the economy of our people and our nation.

56. Consequently, we must strengthen the culture of entrepreneurship. By definition, an entrepreneur is someone who is deft and capable in conducting business and commerce in a professional manner. We must inculcate this quality into our children right from a very early age, in schools and in universities. In the same vein we hope GLCs will also discharge their social responsibility in developing Malay entrepreneurs, including women entrepreneurs, who are resilient and competitive. It is worth noting that 50 GLCs are currently doing well under the able stewardship of professional managers most of whom are Bumiputeras.

57. At the same time we must find formulae and mechanisms to enhance the resilience and sustainability of Malay entrepreneurs in the face of stiff competition in a global environment. Naturally one of the best methods is to enhance their knowledge and skills in matters of commerce and trade. Business can be likened to swimming and staying afloat in the open sea, whether it is in shark infested and bloodied red oceans, or in uncharted and calm blue oceans. I have repeatedly spoken of the Blue Ocean Strategy which focuses on creating demand, finding new niches and making competition irrelevant.

58. Malay entrepreneurs ought to explore new and uncharted areas of business. Areas where they can create their own niche. Among other things, Malay entrepreneurs should look at business opportunities in Halal products, medicines, logistics, biotechnology, modern agriculture, Islamic finance, aerospace technologies, oil and gas, tourism and animation. The thousands of graduates who have just left university or even those who now work at companies should consider entrepreneurship. They should be bold in taking risks after gathering sufficient knowledge, training and experience. Ultimately, after everything has been said and done, what we hope to have is a group of formidable entrepreneurs who will dominate the nation's economic landscape.

Political Stability As A Pre-Requisite In Elevating A National Civilization

Ladies and gentlemen,

59. Political stability is a pre-requisite in building the civilization that we want, one that is characterized by peace, harmony and prosperity. The political reality of this country demands that we continuously win general elections, and win them with more than a two-thirds majority. Only this can ensure that we can effectively govern and maintain stability.

60. Next year will be the forth year in this 11th electoral term. The date of the 12th General Election is of course entirely the prerogative of the Prime Minister. Be that as it may, the political radars have gone into overdrive and the election temperature is rising. For us, what is most important is our preparedness to face the General Elections. That preparedness certainly does not mean making new bush jackets or Baju Kurung in anticipation of becoming candidates. Nor does it include whispering campaigns, jostling against one another and moving about to and fro bringing along one's resume to lobby for candidacy. Indeed, as far as candidacy is concerned, our attitude should be one of acceptance. If we are chosen, well and good, if not then so be it, for there is always wisdom behind every decision.

61. The preparedness I was alluding to earlier is not about candidacy but about the readiness of our election machinery and activating it at all levels: ballot box areas, electoral constituencies, branch offices and divisions throughout the country. Our Election Committees are made up of at least 15 portfolios. Don't let these portfolios amount to nothing more than mere words in written reports, or on billboards in the Election Operations Centers. They must definitely move at the grassroots level, holding community activities and getting down on the ground in every sense of the phrase.

62. Our confidence in repeating our sterling success in the last elections is not without basis. Thanks to the hard work and cooperation of everyone involved, we defeated Pas in Kuala Berang. Pas fell once again in Pengkalan Pasir and in Batu Talam the independent candidate that stood against us was completely wiped out. The DAP fell flat in Machap, and PKR failed miserably in Ijok. We won every single time, with impressive majorities, because of the people's resounding support for UMNO and for Barisan Nasional. The opposition may have waxed lyrical in ranting and raving against us, but the people always knew better. They could always tell the real from the fake.

63. PAS, PKR and DAP will never be able to match Barisan Nasional's record of achievement. In the 50 years that we have

governed this beloved nation, we have been fair and just and have brought benefit to all. On the back of the capability of our leaders, and their total commitment to religion, to the people and to the country, God-willing, Barisan Nasional will continue to be chosen by the people and we will continue to govern.

Ladies and gentlemen,

64. Allow me to repeat the 4 C [In Bahasa the four M] formula of which I have spoken of previously as the formula to prepare ourselves for elections. The first 'C' is to close ranks among Wanita, Pemuda and Puteri and also among the component parties of the Barisan Nasional. The second 'C' is to continuously coax more people to become party members and voters. The third 'C' is to connect to the people, which involves the party machinery and departments and agencies. The fourth C is the capability of solving the problems of the rakyat effectively and efficiently.

65. We have to win the hearts and minds of the people in everything we do. There are two ways of doing this: one is to do what the rakyat like, and the other is to avoid doing what they do not like. Everyone appreciates people who work hard, have a pleasant disposition, work for charity, defend the weak, resolve problems quickly and people who are moderate and approachable. Service to the people is endless and continuous, at all hours of the day and night.

66. When we have won the hearts of the people, they will give us their undivided support. And when the Barisan Nasional wins, so too will the people. The outstanding record of the Barisan Nasional shows that the people always win when the government they have consistently elected gave them and continues to give them good infrastructure, free education, healthcare, modern agriculture, job opportunities, business opportunities, and a high quality of living.

67. At the same time we must fight crime and we must look at all the problems faced by members of the public, so as to ensure peace in the community. Sometimes we forget that peace doesn't just happen by itself. It takes a lot of work. There are countries in the world that are forever in turmoil for one reason or another. Their people die due to wars and hunger. Our people, on the other hand, die because of road accidents and unhealthy eating. It is a big difference. No doubt there is still much that we must do to improve, but for the most part our people are contented to live in relative peace, harmony and prosperity.

The Challenges

Ladies and gentlemen,

68. As a people, we, the Malays, cannot afford to be left behind. History has taught us well that we must never let our differences get the better of us. If we are disunited, our leadership will be weakened and when that happens, the consequences will be dire indeed. Avoiding this is one of the biggest challenges in elevating our nation's civilization.

69. The disintegration of people because of political differences can be disastrous and those who perpetually hate anything and everything done by the leaders of UMNO are in fact weakening the Malay leadership. And yet there are leaders of the opposition who continue to do so, having the audacity to even call for street protests and to twist religious teachings to suit their cause.

70. The fact of the matter is that Malay political power will no longer be strong if we are forever fighting and squabbling amongst ourselves. The weakening of Malay political and economic power will take us backwards to the level of pre-Merdeka where we were poor, downtrodden and lacking in self-worth. Remember that we do not want to become a weakened people. Remember that the lazy will lose, the frivolous will fail and those without vision will be vanquished.

71. Disunity will also disgrace the Muslims in Malaysia who should in fact be setting a good example. Surely we do not want the troubles that plague other Muslim countries to ever infect us? We must avoid such calamities at all cost and to do this we must unite. If we don't we shall lose the power that we now grasp in our hands, and when that happens, even tears of blood will no longer make any difference.

Resolving Disputes

Ladies and gentlemen,

72. When differences arise we must find ways of resolving them. I have often spoken of the philosophy of the Bugis people in settling disputes, which I find quite interesting and relevant. It is the philosophy of the three 'tips'. The first tip is the tip of the tongue, which means conflict resolution through discussions and negotiations. The second tip is the tip of "that other thing" which is a tongue-in-cheek euphemism for marriage as a means to strengthen bonds, friendships and family ties. After all else fails, then the third tip is the tip of the Keris which means to fight; an option which is never resorted to because the first two tips usually do the trick.

73. *That is the philosophy of conflict resolution of one of the Malay tribes which we can use as a model. It must be said clearly here, however that the symbolism of the Keris in Malay culture carries different meanings depending on time and context. For example when Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al Haj declared that the date of Merdeka shall be August 31st 1957 at a special rally held in Bandar Hilir Melaka on February 20th 1956, He was handed a symbolic 100 year old Keris by Wanita UMNO which the Tunku then unsheathed, kissed and thrust towards the sky. This act was witnessed with great jubilation and pride by all races who were overjoyed about the forthcoming independence. At that instance, the Keris was a symbol of the success of a united struggle.*

74. *And so when the Pemuda UMNO produced the Panca Warisan Keris and raised it symbolically, it was quite uncalled-for, for the opposition to turn it into a political issue. The Pemuda were not declaring hostilities, but were instead re-affirming its struggle within the boundaries of the Federal Constitution. Let there be no misunderstanding of that simple gesture that it may lead to disunity. Unity is of the utmost importance in a multi-racial, multi-religious society like ours.*

75. *Let us learn from the recent stories of the organ donors and recipients which transcend racial sensitivities. 17 year-old Muhammad Fikri Nor Azmi underwent a heart transplant at the National Heart Institute on December 15th 2005. He received his new heart from a non-Malay donor, and because of that he now lives a normal healthy life just like other youngsters of his age.*

76. *More recently on October 5th 2007, 14 year-old Tee Hui Yee underwent two heart transplants after she received a heart first from a Malay donor, and then later a Chinese donor. The surgical team was made up of 34 specialist doctors and assistants, comprising 24 Malays, 5 Chinese and 5 Indians, led by Dato Azhari Yakub and Dr. Mohd Ezani Mohd Taib.*

77. *These true stories touch our hearts and serve as special and historic symbols of our unity. They are also examples of our capabilities in the field of medicine. But over and above that, we should make examples of these stories, which can bring the different races closer together. This is an essential ingredient in elevating our national civilization.*

The Values of A Civilization

Distinguished delegates,

78. *Malays are capable of working hard, of maintaining discipline, of being loyal, of working as a team, of standing up for truth and of helping one another. The phrase "Kulaan Mengayuh Berumbai" in the Banjar dialect, describes the nature of Malays as "brothers who work together". Let us make the most of these positive traits and build our nation on the strength of these values so that we are respected and admired. Let us learn from the strength of others. Let us practice the teachings of Islam which are beautiful and universally applicable. Here and now, let us build our strength based on these virtues and values, and move forward towards a common vision.*

79. *We must look back at the struggles of UMNO in the last 61 years, so that we are assured that we remain on the path of the virtuous. The struggles of years gone by witnessed huge sacrifices made by those that came before us. They voluntarily sacrificed their wealth, their time and their energy. How different it is today when everything comes with a price. There must always be incentives in some form or another. Even to contest for the G7 or the G2 spot, money politics come into play. We must put a stop to this if this struggle is to be cleansed and kept pure.*

80. *A veteran UMNO leader lamented that the state of things are so different now, and cynically quipped to the effect that nowadays "if you give, then you will receive, if you don't you will fall alone".*

81. *We must improve ourselves and we must change in order to be more effective. We must adopt the concept of "value innovation". We have to move forward and find new and better ways of doing things. Even in mundane things like checking the electoral roll where workers often use a pencil and a ruler to go through the list. In this day and age we should already be using computers and gadgets for such things. Even a wallet sized PDA can now contain detailed information about numerous things, including the data of voters in a particular electoral constituency.*

82. *If previously applications are made by writing letters, today everything can be done via web portals and web pages; by e-mail SMS and MMS. If previously the office of a Wakil Rakyat can simply be a small space inside a shop lot, now there can be mobile offices and service centers using vans and busses. This is what we mean by moving ahead and improving ourselves for the benefit of the people.*

The Spirit Of The Struggle

83. *When we look at the history of our independence, the most important thing of note is the spirit of the struggle at the time, even though the people then were not wealthy. Many would traverse for miles, selling their gold, riding on old bicycles, hitching rides on stench-filled fish trucks, sacrificing money time and energy just for the privilege of being part of the movement to liberate the nation. They may have been materially poor, but they were rich in their spirit. They had an abundance of readiness to fight for what they believed in. As time goes by, and long after we have grasped power, values erode and value systems change. Beware the*

onslaught of materialism for it can change you and your beliefs. To the young who continue to love the party, I congratulate you for being true to the struggle. To the older generation; all of you have contributed much to our cause, and your country and your people will forever be indebted to you.

84. It must be admitted that there are certain negative traits which are quite notable amongst some of our people. These include negative behaviour such as a reluctance to pay debts, lack of punctuality, non-diligence in doing work, and an aversion to certain types of work to the extent that it has led to an influx of foreign workers. Obviously such behaviour must be changed. A new culture must be adopted. A culture of readiness to serve and to sacrifice, very much like the culture practiced by the generation of days gone by. Let us rid ourselves of the shackles of negative behaviour. Let us enhance the spirit of volunteerism in us, towards the defence of religion, race and country. Let us regard this sacred struggle as nothing less than a Jihad and a religious obligation which will be forever rewarded.

85. We must use our intelligence and we must be pragmatic in striving for success. Intelligence and pragmatism are two essential elements in transformational leadership which is leadership that is visionary and effective in developing and governing a nation. A transformational leader will never stop fighting to convert failure to success and backwardness to progress.

Strengthening The Grassroots

Ladies and gentlemen,

86. The structure of UMNO begins from the branches, extending up to the Divisions, to the State level and finally to the Federal level. It is extremely important to be strong at the grassroots because every member belongs to a branch and they are all spread across the country. The latest data shows that UMNO members now total as many as 3,345,612 individuals coming from 20,931 branches and 191 divisions from 13 states. If, let's say, we have three or four leaders at the branch levels, that is the Branch Chief and the Chiefs of the Wanita Youth and Puteri wings, then we have some 60,000 leaders at the grassroots level. This in itself is proof of the greatness of UMNO as a pillar of various successes.

87. The most important fact is that a strong UMNO begins at the branch level. Therefore let us strengthen our branches by increasing the number of members, registering new voters, holding regular activities, working with the authorities and the community to combat crimes, helping to eradicate poverty, giving aid when disasters occur, assisting the disabled, the senior citizens and the single parents, and campaigning from house to house. We must take an interest and we must be aware of everything that happens within our circle of influence.

88. Like a tree that will never be strong if it is weak at the roots, UMNO too will not be strong if at the most basic level it is weak. Therefore we must care for the roots and provide nourishment in the form of positive values and virtues so that the roots are healthy and the whole tree will flourish. When the "UMNO tree" is strong and healthy, it will provide the best shelter, rain or shine. Not just for the Malays, but for all Malaysians everywhere.

Bringing UMNO To The People

89. We must bring the struggles and ideals of UMNO to the people. Our struggles and ideals are for the benefit of everyone in this country. When we eradicate poverty, we do so without looking at race or colour. When we carry out social programs, we do so with the people of Malaysia in mind. Our struggles transcend the boundaries of race and religion.

90. Nevertheless, bringing the struggles and ideals of UMNO to the people will naturally also include opening the doors to all Malays everywhere and doubling our effort to add new members. We must therefore continue with our initiatives toward that end including the "My Family Members are UMNO Members" campaign which has been launched earlier. Let us ensure that our children and our relatives all come into UMNO's fold. The more members we have, the more UMNO's struggles will be embraced by the people.

91. The tradition of fighting for the people is part of the spirit of UMNO's struggle. Fighting for the good of the people of various races, in cities and villages, is UMNO's main obligation and the obligation of the Barisan Nasional. How rewarding it is for us when we are able to lend a hand to those in need. Imagine the joy of the poor when we replace their leaky roof, or when we install new floors to replace their rotting floorboards, or when we provide schooling to their many children whom they cannot afford to educate on their own. We have done all these and we will continue to do more as part of our on going tradition of fighting for the people.

The Grand Design

Distinguished delegates

92. UMNO has a grand design to elevate the Malays and the people of Malaysia. Part of that grand design is the New Economic

Policy, Vision 2020, Islam Hadhari, The National Mission, the comprehensive development in the five regional corridors and the "Gagasan 2057". Today, along the lines of this grand design let us take the conscious step forward to reach for the stars and elevate the national civilization .

93. The Malay Agenda will continue to be UMNO's main agenda. Malays are still left far behind in various fields. The Malay agenda covers the spheres of socio-economics, education, equitable development, and the sanctity of Islam. We have incorporated various components into the Ninth Malaysia Plan in furtherance of this noble cause. Indeed the Malay Agenda is and should be a National Agenda, for when the Malays progress, everyone else will also benefit. Unity will also be strengthened and we will arrive at a new dawn of even greater prosperity and progress.

94. As we face the challenges of globalization we must be ever stronger in politics, in the mastery of knowledge, in preserving our socio-cultural values and in our involvement in economic activities. Preparing our people to face the challenges ahead is the sacred duty of UMNO and its leadership. We will not falter in upholding this duty and the beacon of our struggles will illuminate the entire nation.

A Well-Oiled Election Machinery

Ladies and gentlemen,

95. Through the years Wanita UMNO have worked tirelessly for the sake of the family, for the party and for the nation. The spirit of volunteerism and a high level of commitment in every activity and program is a well-entrenched working culture of members of the movement. We will continue to work towards the stated target of having 30% of decision makers to be from among women. Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz, together with her well-oiled Wanita UMNO machinery will undoubtedly continue to deliver and they are most certain to work hard to ensure our victory in the next general elections.

96. Pemuda UMNO meanwhile, continues to move forward with numerous exciting and refreshing events and programs. The voice of the Pemuda continues to reflect the wants and needs of the people. Dato Seri Hishamuddin Tun Hussein, together with his able soldiers of Pemuda will most certainly take to the frontlines without hesitation, leading our election charge and becoming UMNO's primary line of defence, taking on the opposition in any and every electoral battlefield.

97. Puteri UMNO will continue to shine as the force of rejuvenation in the party, through various creative initiatives representing the voice of a new generation of young women. Their indefatigable efforts in promoting better education for the people and their deftness in using technology for the political cause has made them continuously relevant. Datuk Noraini Ahmad and her Puteri team will most assuredly play an important role in strengthening our election machinery.

98. The combined strengths of all three wings will make us invincible when we stand solidly behind the leadership of UMNO and Barisan Nasional, helmed by YAB Dato' Seri Abdullah Hj Ahmad Badawi. With unshakeable confidence and on the faith that "Malays shall never fade from this earth", and with the blessings of Allah let us unite and work together to ensure a glorious victory in the next general elections, as we reach for the stars and elevate our national civilization.

*99. In the name of Allah the most gracious the most merciful
O Allah, the Lord of the heavens and the earth
We plead for your favor and your blessings
Give us strength and unity
By Your power and Your grace,
Bestow upon us peace and prosperity
We beg Your Patronage and Protection,
To protect the sanctity of the Faith that you have revealed o us,
To defend our people
And to continue building this beloved nation.
With your Mercy and Blessings O Lord
We walk the footsteps of Statesmen
Along the path of a noble struggle
With the grace of Your Supreme Might, O Lord
We toil to foster an Ummah of distinction
With your Divine Blessings
We stand together to reach for the stars
Amiin, Amiin, Ya Rabbil Alamiin*

100. In the name of Allah the Most Gracious and Most Merciful, it is with great pleasure that I declare open the General Assembly of Wanita, Pemuda and Puteri UMNO for the year 2007. Wassalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh.

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