

SPEECH AT AIKOL GRADUATION DINNER  
Best Western Pacific Hotel, Kuala Lumpur  
12 November 2007

This is the first time that I am attending and speaking at a graduation dinner since my appointment as President of the Court of Appeal Malaysia and since I have been declared to be the Acting Chief Justice of Malaysia. I do not know whether it means anything to you. If it does, I hope you are happy about it. If not, never mind. Perhaps, it is unfortunate for you that you are a little too late to get the Chief Justice and a little too early to get the new Chief Justice, to be here. So, you only manage to get the Acting Chief Justice!

This is also the fifth time that I am speaking at AIKOL graduation dinner. I have stopped worrying about repeating myself as you were not at the previous dinners. I am not worried about the professors and lecturers because, even if they were at the previous dinners, I will only be doing what they have been doing all these years, with some modifications and additions, of course. However, in order not to know whether I am repeating myself or not, I did not look at my previous speeches. You can say that this is a fresh one.

I congratulate you all for having passed your final law examination. Under the Legal Profession Act 1976, you are already a “qualified person.” However, to be an “advocate and solicitor”, there are other requirements that you will have to fulfill. I am sure you will have no problem fulfilling those requirements.

Passing the final law examination is an achievement which, I am sure, will make your parents proud of you. On your part, I am sure you feel a great sense of relief that, at last, you do not have to worry about attending classes, completing your assignments, studying and sitting for your examinations and so on. At least that stage of your life, called the student life, is over. Once again, congratulations.

But, at every end there is a beginning. This is the beginning of a new phase in your life. You will have to look for a job, learn the job, do it and compete with the rest of the world. Again, my advice to you is not to worry too much about the future. After all, you started life in this world by knowing only how to cry. You learnt one thing after another and you have reached this far. Just take things as they come and do your best as and when they come. Along the way, you will find what suits you best and what you can do best. Concentrate on it.

Thirty eight years ago, I started from where you are now starting. I was in no better position at the starting point than most of you are today. I was completely on my own, with nobody to guide and nobody to advise, what more to help. I did my best in everything I had to do, honestly, and leave the rest to God. Of course, compared to others, I had more disadvantages than others around me. But, by the Will of God Al-Mighty, I am where I am today. I did not even dare to dream of it, until lately. But, to me, what is important is that, until today, I can still say, "I have never begged nor lobbied nor compromised between right and wrong". One thing that I learnt towards the end of my career is that: Eventually, truth and honesty will prevail.

I am telling you all these with the hope that, may be, you can learn something from my experience.

I would like to take this opportunity to make two points. First, when you are out in the competitive world of today, you have to learn to be more assertive. The "Malay way" is no longer suitable in the present day competitive world.

Secondly, I would like to see more Malay/Muslim lawyers in the main-stream, not sitting on the side-line watching the world pass by. I would like to see them becoming litigation lawyers. I would like to see them becoming experts in Islamic Banking, finance and takaful. You have an advantage because you know Arabic. I would like to see more Malay/Muslim lawyers sitting in the Bar Council and Bar Committees. Just look at the lists of committee members of the Bar Council and the Bar Committees of the States. They are not at all proportionate either in terms of the percentage of the population or the number of practising lawyers in the country.

This is a happy occasion. I should not be too serious. Enjoy it besides paying your gratitude to God Al-Mighty, thanking your professors and lecturers, your parents and, not to forget, the Government of Malaysia that had provided you the facilities, assisted you financially and, most of all, ensured that there was law and order that had enabled you to pursue your education. Too often, in this country, that is taken for granted. Please pause for one moment and say "thank you Malaysia".

I wish you all success in whatever carrier you choose.

Thank you.

Dato' Abdul Hamid Mohamad  
(President , Court of Appeal, Malaysia  
Acting Chief Justice, Malaysia)

