

SPEECH AT FAREWELL DINNER BY PENANG BAR
9.10.99

(This is the first time in my life that I am speaking with a band behind me. May be we should introduce the same arrangement in court so that your submissions and our judgments will sound better, irrespective of the contents. – Added impromptu).

I see that you are enjoying yourselves tonight. Indeed you have every reason to celebrate: the economy is recovering, suits are plentiful and, last but not least, I am being transferred out of Penang!

I shall not spoil your mood or your party by making a long speech. It is not my style, anyway. My policy has always been not to make a simple thing difficult but to try to make a difficult thing simple.

Nine and a half years ago, at the welcoming dinner that you gave me, I said: “I don’t promise you that I will write learned judgments. But I promise you that I will write honest judgments”. I also said “I will do my best. And I will leave it to you to judge whether my best is good enough”.

Looking back now, actually I was talking about what is now popularly known as “transparency”, without even realizing it. May be I was ahead of time. May be it is something inherent in me. But, it all boils down to honesty. And honesty is not a new creation of economists, journalists or politicians. To me, honesty is what my father taught me.

Tonight, the time has come for you to make your judgments. Indeed, most of you, I believe, have made your judgments much earlier. But, whatever your judgments are, I will not appeal.

I don’t claim to write learned judgments. In fact, I only cite authorities when I don’t know the law. But, I dare say that I write honest judgments. So, if I am right I am honestly right and if I am wrong, I am honestly wrong.

Often, a judgment is considered “learned” if you cite a lot of authorities. Now, with the assistance of computers, you don’t need very much intelligence, not even a good memory, to get the authorities. Your research officer, your assistant, your secretary, even your children can punch them out for you.

On the other hand, to write an honest judgment, you have to have honesty in you. Honesty is not something that can be punched in and out of the computer, or you. It is in your genes, in your upbringing, in your faith.

I thank you for tolerating me for more than nine years. I thank you for all the dinners that you invited me to over the years, including this one. I apologise for any shortcoming of mine. I also forgive yours, if any. I came with a clean slate. I want to go with a clean slate: no grudge, no black list.

I wish you all success and good health. See you in Kuala Lumpur, in court, as counsel, please!

Thank you.

Dato' Abdul Hamid bin Haji Mohamad.