

ACCEPTANCE SPEECH BY YAB DATUK PATINGGI ABANG HAJI ABDUL RAHMAN JOHARI BIN TUN DATUK ABANG HAJI OPENG IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE HONORARY DOCTORATE AWARD

7 OCTOBER 2017
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY SIBU

Tuan Yang Terutama Yang di-Pertua Negeri Sarawak, Tun Pehin Sri Haji Abdul Taib Mahmud, serta

Yang Amat Berbahagia Toh Puan Datuk Patinggi Hajah Ragad Kurdi Taib

Bagi pihak Kerajaan Negeri Sarawak dan hadirin sekalian, kola menjunjung kasih kepada Tuan Yang Terutama Tun dan Toh Puan Datuk Patinggi kerana sudi hadir bersama dalam majlis yang amat bermakna kepada usaha pembangunan pendidikan di Negeri Sarawak.

Tun merupakan pemimpin yang amat mengambil berat tentang kemajuan dalam bidang pendidikan di Negeri Sarawak. Walaupun pendidikan berada di bawah bidang kuasa Kerajaan Persekutuan Tun dan juga pemimpin sebelum Tun telah mengambil langkah supaya anak-anak Sarawak diberi peluang untuk menimba ilmu dengan menggunakan sumber daripada Negeri ini sendiri.

Yayasan Sarawak telah menyediakan tajaan dan pinjaman kepada ribuan anak Sarawak untuk melanjutkan pelajaran di dalam dan luar negara. Berberapa buah universiti termasuk Swinburne, Curtin dan UCTS telah ditubuhkan supaya anak-anak Sarawak boleh menuntut ilmu di Negeri Sarawak sendiri.

Tun, kola memberi jaminan bahawa fokus kepada bidang pendidikan untuk tujuan pengembangan ilmu dan penyediaan tenaga kerja dan profesional di Negeri Sarawak akan diteruskan dengan lebih gigih lagi.

Sekali lagi Tun, kola mengucapkan terima kasih dan semoga kehadiran Tun dan Toh Puan memberi lebih makna kepada majlis kita pada pagi ini. Kita berdoa agar Tun dan Toh Puan sentiasa diberkati dan dilindungi oleh Allah SWT dan terus menjadi payung perpaduan dan kemajuan Negeri Sarawak, khususnya dalam bidang pendidikan.

Sekarang Tun kola mohon berucap kepada hadirin sekalian.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

1. I would like to say thank you to UCTS for conferring me with the Honorary Doctorate Award. It is indeed an honour for me to be here today with all of you, especially the graduates on this special occasion.
2. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate all the graduates and their parents and guardians at this 2nd Convocation of UCTS. I wish all of you

graduates success in your future undertakings and welcomed you to contribute to the development of Sarawak.

Ladies and gentlemen,

3. Through Sarawak Foundation we are now able to have more funds to send more of our students to study locally and overseas in various new disciplines. The first batch of 36 students has recently been awarded the Tun Taib Bursary to do studies up to PhD level. We have also awarded scholarships to 40 students to study medicine at UNIMAS. We will continue to give medic scholarships to students to study at UNIMAS so that in the next five years we will have produced 200 doctors.
4. The award of so many scholarships to our students is unprecedented in the history of Sarawak's award of scholarship. Thanks to Sarawak Foundation timber contractors who have agreed to the increase of timber premium from 80 cents to RM50 per cubic metre for the sake of education in Sarawak. Now, we can have RM300 million for educational purposes a year instead of a mere RM9 million previously.
5. In the last cabinet reshuffle, I have created a new Ministry, i.e. the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Research to spearhead efforts to upgrade the status of education, the study of STEM subjects and research activities in Sarawak. We used to assign a Minister to hold a watching brief for education in Sarawak as education is a federal matter but this is not sufficient because we need better focus and better coordination to suit our needs and interest.

Ladies and gentlemen,

6. Our world today is driven by technology. Digital technologies such as Big-Data Analytics, Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain and 3D printing are now the platforms of economic transformation in many countries. There is hardly any business that is not getting transformed through technology advancement. Businesses and society at large are closely connected through ever faster communication channels and means of travel.
7. I have just come back from Europe yesterday to see first-hand how countries like Estonia, that was once poor during the Soviet era, have boldly embraced digital technologies to totally transform its economy. Government services, voting and banking services are all done digitally on mobile devices thus easing transaction, saving time and resources that can be used beneficially somewhere else. The present over the counter mode of services will be obsolete as transactions can all practically be done on the palm of the hand. We will soon launch our own e-payment system called Sarawakpay and we hope this will provide a platform for many forms of transactions. Estonia even have things like e-citizen which allows you to be a citizen of the country and do business there without your physical presence there. This shows how bold and

innovative their ideas are which have made them successful in a relatively short period of time.

8. This is the direction that Sarawak will take. The old economic development model cannot bring Sarawak to the forefront of digital development that the whole world is trying to arrive at. We cannot wait for others to tell us what to do and we cannot wait for help to come our way. We have to decide our own destiny.
9. Of course we have to do a lot of things in the process of digitising our economy. It goes without saying that first we have to strengthen our multi-media and communication infrastructure to allow for high-speed Internet. It is not easy to connect all places in Sarawak with high speed Internet especially in the mountainous and remote places but we are determined to find ways and means to solve this problem of connectivity.

Ladies and gentlemen,

10. UCTS is 100% owned by the State Government of Sarawak. It has been established to:

- Produce the skilled manpower required to support Sarawak's industrialisation programme;
- Provide access to quality higher education in the central region of Sarawak.
- Support Research and Development activities in order to add value to our vast bio-diversity resources.

11. Our human capacity is of utmost importance as part of the ecosystem that we need to create to leapfrog from a conventional to a digital economy. Education with a focus on digital capability, innovation and creativity must therefore be at the centre of any long-term plan for Sarawak. I am glad to note that UCTS is already offering programs of study in the fields of Software Engineering and Network Computing and have research activities in the areas of Cybersecurity and Drone Technology. I would like to encourage more of our young people to take up study courses and entrepreneurship opportunities that is related to the digital economy.

12. The convergence of advanced communication technology, energy systems and automation is driving change in all spheres, including businesses. Industry 4.0 or the Fourth Industrial Revolution is now a global phenomenon. The only way for industries to compete in the future is by embracing technologies that are often very disruptive.

13. I would therefore like to encourage UCTS to establish smart partnerships with industries, especially the key strategic sectors around Sibu to undertake research and innovation projects to prepare our existing industries with the coming opportunities and challenges.

14. SibU is the hub for our resource-based industries. We have major companies having their Headquarters in SibU such as RH, WTK, KTS and Ta Ann and other industries. I would like to propose that UCTS establish a Wood Technology Centre of Excellence in collaboration with Sarawak Timber Industry Development Cooperation (STIDC) and Sarawak Timber Association (STA) that support our timber industries to develop more innovative downstream wood products for the world market.
15. Our timber industries need to undertake research and move into planted forest as it would not be sustainable if we continue to depend on natural forest. The Centre of Excellence can undertake research and support the introduction of new technologies and advanced processes in our timber industry from planted forest for it to be sustainable and continue to be a major economy in Sarawak alongside many others. I will give my full support to strengthen our timber industries.
16. UCTS has an excellent, beautiful and high-tech Green campus that provides a environment conducive for teaching, learning and research. The State Government has invested substantially to provide the excellent facilities for the benefit of our future generation. I am happy to be here and be part of UCTS and wished UCTS more success for the future.
17. I would like to end by again thanking UCTS for the conferment of Honorary Doctorate Award and congratulations to all graduates on your success. Let us all work together to make Sarawak the most developed part of Malaysia.

Once again I would like to say thank you to Tun and Toh Puan for your kind presence.

Thank you.