

Graduation Address

**By HE Mr Andrew Goledzinowski
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**Curtin University 2019 Graduation Ceremony
Miri, Sarawak**

Transcript of speech as delivered

Distinguished members of the Curtin family, graduates and family members – good morning.

It's a great honour to be speaking to you here this morning. Thinking about what I wanted to say, it occurs to me that you, here, are probably the luckiest cohort of graduates ever to emerge from a Malaysian University. Why do I say that?

Well first of all, obviously, you're graduating with degrees from a first class international university. That's something that will hold you in good stead for the rest of your careers. Just like you need a passport to come from Kuala Lumpur to Sarawak, this is a passport that will carry you anywhere you want to go in the world.

But there is more going on than that. Your timing is also impeccable. You are graduating into a Malaysia that, according to economic predictions, in the next few years, will itself graduate into the family of developed countries. Now, I used to work for the World Bank. There are statistics that will determine whether that is true or not. It sounds logical that if you keep growing you will eventually become developed. But, most countries fail. They fall into something called the "middle income trap". The last country to escape this trap was South Korea and that was

nearly two generations ago. So, if Malaysia can do it, and it's not guaranteed, that will fundamentally shape your future and the future of your children.

One more thing about your cohort. When I was standing here in this same place, at this time last year, Malaysia had a different destiny it seemed. But since then, the Malaysian people have made a different decision. Malaysia took a huge step forward towards liberal democracy. Why is that important? Well, it's the model that Australia embraces. We think it's important because democracy is the system that best enables people to hold their government to account. And liberalism, well that just means the right to live your life as you chose without interference, provided you accord the same respect to others. Now this is the system, this is the model internationally which in our view has provided the best outcomes in terms of peace, prosperity and happiness. So that is something that Malaysia's should very much be proud of.

Now before you think I am making a political statement, I'm really not. I'm not congratulating the government; I'm congratulating Malaysia for its first democratic change of government in over 60 years. And I'm congratulating you, those of you who exercised your franchise and made this decision.

Applause

And I'm aware some of you will also be thinking, "what is this guy talking about?" "I'm disappointed, the government is making terrible mistakes, it's letting me down, it's not doing what it promised". And that's also fair. I think that if the Prime Minister was sitting here, he would probably agree with you.

This is a new government with new ministers that are making mistakes. Similarly, the opposition is new to its role and it's learning how to be an opposition and making mistakes. But the good news is, in four years' time when you are voting,

and I hope you do vote, you will have the choice between a better government and a better opposition than Malaysia has had in the past. And that is significant.

In a few weeks time, we in Australia are about to go into an election as well. I'm not going to predict the outcome, but we have now, this year, the highest level of youth enrolment in this coming election than we have ever had in our history. This shows how people are choosing to become engaged in their future. I hope that is what you do as well.

They say that success is a poor teacher. So the fact that there are mistakes being made is actually a positive. In your life too, you should ensure that you never waste a mistake - that you learn from each one. Success is a poor teacher. Failure is actually a very good teacher.

Before I conclude, I want to address a few personal remarks to the male graduates in the room and some remarks to the female graduates in the room.

To the male graduates. You are graduating into a world that, by and large, was made by men, for men. You probably know that. But that's changing and I hope that you know that as well. And that is a good thing because the most successful societies in the world are those that respect every member and award equal opportunity to every member. That really is the way that, I think, Malaysia will progress to have the destiny that it wishes to have for itself. And if you do not know what I am talking about, then I suggest you turn to the young woman on your left or your right and ask her and I'm sure she will tell you.

Laughter

Now a few remarks to the women in the audience. In my long professional career, it has been my experience that women are the professional equivalent to men in every respect - except for one. And that is confidence.

Very often, women present themselves in the professional sphere with less confidence than men. And there are reasons for that. But if you want to succeed; if you want to achieve your potential; then you need to work on your confidence. That is my only advice to you. And if you want to know what confidence looks like then I suggest you look to the young man on your left or on your right and I'm sure he will show you.

That is really it. All that remains for me to say is congratulations, well done and good luck.

Applause