

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MALAYSIA ACCEPTANCE SPEECH DIALOGUE BRINGS DOWN THE WALLS BETWEEN US

'Genuine dialogue, rooted in sincere friendship,' SGI President Ikeda says, 'has the power to overcome differences in nationality, to transcend borders and interests, to bring down the walls of separation.'

SGI President Ikeda's speech on receiving an honorary degree of Doctor of Letters from the Universiti Putra Malaysia at a special ceremony held at the university, in Serdang, Malaysia, Nov. 29.

Just now, it has been my great privilege to be conferred the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters from the Universiti Putra Malaysia, which is advancing toward the grand vision of being a university of the new millennium. I humbly accept this extraordinary honor, filled with a sense of deep pride, gratitude and responsibility. Thank you very much indeed.

It is time to welcome a new century of world peace, human unity and cooperation.

One of Malaysia's foremost poets, Usman Awang, writes these beautiful words:

*Where the continents love him,
where the air embraces him,
his songs overflow with deep love and peace.*

*Sing of peace with the breath of life!
Sing in the ear of the newborn child!
Let it resound to the peak of the tower
where generals meet and map their plans!*

*Oh, how beautiful is the full moon
spreading its bounty over the lake's expanse!
That is the goal toward which we aim.*

The time has come for humankind to bid farewell to an old century rent by the explosive, dissonant cacophony of destruction and confrontation. It is time that we welcome a new century that resonates with the symphonic poetry of world peace, the clear, harmonious tones of human unity and cooperation.

The Universiti Putra Malaysia is boldly leading the world's universities in taking up this challenge, this new mission of higher education in the coming century.

Your esteemed university's sublime educational philosophy encompasses a vision of the future development of all humankind. The Universiti Putra Malaysia positions service as one of the fundamental pillars of university education, coequal with teaching and research. I was moved to learn this, for I feel that it expresses the solid philosophical and spiritual values of the Universiti Putra Malaysia, with which I am in complete sympathy.

Chancellor Tun Haji Hamdan is a renowned leader in the sphere of education, having

dedicated his life to the noble conviction that leadership begins with setting an example. He has stated that teachers must personally demonstrate their service and contributions as professionals and as people sincerely committed to their work.

From my experience of having founded Soka University, I can keenly appreciate the truth of these words. Indeed, they express a core philosophy that should be learned and put into practice not only by educators but by all people in leadership positions.

Our fundamental point of departure should be contributing to people's happiness.

Rabindranath Tagore, the Indian poet and educator, asserts, "In education, the most important factor is an atmosphere of creative activity." The Universiti Putra Malaysia, I am convinced, is brimming with this kind of creative activity.

When Vice-Chancellor Tan Sri Syed Jalaludin visited Tokyo in October, I had the opportunity to ask him the secret of the Universiti Putra Malaysia's extraordinary success and remarkable development. He unhesitatingly attributed it to the university's efforts to make education, which has long been the exclusive domain of the elite, widely available to people in all segments of society. Opening its doors to more people, he said, has been the driving force behind the university's development. I was moved by his response.

The key is to return to the most fundamental point of departure—to the importance of contributing to people's welfare, to the development of youth, to the happiness of humankind—and to pool our wisdom and energy, taking concrete action. I believe this applies to all areas of society, and that this is the way to overcome the sense of hopelessness and malaise that has predominated at the century's end.

I understand that there is a Malaysian saying to the effect that if you lose your way, you should return to your original point of departure. This is the kind of wisdom that humanity requires now.

Friendship through education is the powerful defense against all that harms humanity.

Genuine dialogue, rooted in sincere friendship, has the power to overcome differences in nationality, to transcend borders and interests, to bring down the walls of separation. It is of utmost importance to advance in a spirit of cooperation on the path of tolerance, coexistence and creativity, while respecting diversity and bringing out the best of that diversity.

Friendship realized through education, in particular, is the most powerful defense against that which would harm or undermine peace and human happiness. This was the unyielding conviction of first Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the founder of the philosophy of Soka education, as well as that of his successor, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda.

The brutal forces of Japanese militarism attacked this beautiful land of Malaysia, launching their invasion a short time before the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Our founding president staunchly fought against Japanese militarism and as a result died in prison. Our second president likewise spent two years behind bars, dedicated to the same cause.

The spiritual legacy of these two men has been inherited by both Soka University in Japan and Soka University of America, which will open as a full-fledged liberal arts college next year. Both universities will treasure our friendship with the Universiti Putra

Malaysia, as we strive to create a great path of hope for humanity into the new millennium. I offer you our firmest promise in this regard.

The Austrian writer Stefan Zweig states that when a new generation is inspired with zeal for new work, the world becomes transformed. The color red used in your university coat of arms symbolizes the quest for knowledge, the spirit of pioneering, courage and persistence in confronting challenges. When members of the rising generation—the students of the Universiti Putra Malaysia and Soka University—unite in this courageous spirit, they will, I believe, transform the world.

I close by offering my heartfelt prayers for the limitless prosperity and flourishing of Malaysia, which will shine as a golden crossroads of 21st-century civilization.

And I offer my sincere hopes and best wishes for the continuing development of the Universiti Putra Malaysia and for the eternal glory of each of you, our cherished friends assembled here today.

Terima kasih. (“Thank you” in Malay.)