

LAUNCH OF TUN HUSSEIN ONN CHAIR

Welcoming Remarks

by Tan Sri Dato' Seri Mohamed Jawhar Hassan

Chairman of ISIS Malaysia

Salutations.

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh

Salam Sejahtera

Today is a special day. It is the day that ISIS Malaysia honours Allahyarham Tun Hussein Onn, the former Prime Minister who was also its Founding Chairman. Today, we launch a Chair that memorialises his contributions to the nation and to the region, especially in the field of foreign policy.

It is therefore my distinct pleasure, on behalf of the Board of Directors and Management of the Institute, to welcome each and every one to this occasion.

Our special welcome to His Royal Highness Raja Dr Nazrin Shah ibni Sultan Azlan Muhibbuddin Shah for consenting to grace the occasion with His Royal Highness' presence.

The Board and Management of ISIS Malaysia would also like to welcome Yang Amat Berbahagia Tun Suhaila. Tun's presence at this event adds a singular and touching significance to it.

A warm welcome too, to YBhg Dato' Haris Onn, representing YBhg Dato' Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein Onn, who has been requested by Yang Amat Berhormat Prime Minister to accompany him on his official visit to Myanmar today.

I would like to take this opportunity to record our profound gratitude to the Noah Foundation and its Chairman YBhg Datin Paduka Dr Faridah binti Dato' Abdullah for the full and exclusive support granted to ISIS Malaysia to establish and maintain the Tun Hussein Onn Chair.

I would also like to extend our deepest appreciation to Yang Berhormat Dato' Seri Hishammuddin for his initial blessing when I approached him at a function in Kuala Terengganu on 30th April last year, and for his subsequent total support.

To Dato' Dr Muthiah Alagappa, our prodigal son, welcome back. This prestigious Chair is an honour he is eminently qualified for. The ISIS Board has no doubt that he will more than fulfil its high expectations, and we look forward to the Chair hosting a galaxy of outstanding scholars and intellectuals in the years to come.

My final thanks go to Dato' Dr Mahani Zainal Abidin, the Chief Executive of ISIS Malaysia and her colleagues in Management. They toiled many days and nights to make the event today a memorable one.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to devote the remaining minutes that I have to recall, very briefly, ISIS Malaysia's fond memories of Allahyarham Tun Hussein Onn when he was our Chairman from April 1984 to May 1990.

I myself did not have the privilege of serving Allahyarham Tun. When I came to ISIS in April 1990 the Chairman was already quite ill and was receiving treatment in the United States.

The recollections I make here are distilled from those narrated to me by three persons who had the pleasure of working closely with Allahyarham Tun in ISIS: YBhg Dato' Ahmad Zabri bin Ibrahim, former Company Secretary and Deputy Director General (Management); Tuan Haji Ramli Othman, former Company Secretary and Assistant Director General (Administration); and YBhg Dato' Rohana Tan Sri Mahmood, a Board Member now but a young Researcher often attached to Allahyarham then.

Allahyarham Tun brought with him all the qualities he is remembered for when he came to ISIS Malaysia – honour, dignity and integrity; devotion to work and service to the nation; candour and forthrightness; and simplicity and gentlemanly grace.

In ISIS he demonstrated the same legendary attention to detail, and he prepared thoroughly for the Board meetings and conferences he chaired. He was professional and correct in his dealings with the Management of the Institute. He was simple and

he did not make demands of anyone. He gave advice but he also listened intently and was receptive to sound counsel. He did not interfere in operational matters and matters that were properly the purview of the Director General and Management.

Allahyarham Tun made a seamless transition from leading the government in Track One to chairing the country's leading think-tank in Track Two. As Chairman ISIS he delivered the opening remarks and chaired important ISIS conferences. He also led the Malaysian delegation organised by ISIS Malaysia in bilateral dialogues at home as well as abroad when he did travel. On the other occasions the Director General led the delegation.

The many photographs on ISIS' walls, on exhibition today and in the Special Issue of the ISIS Focus, capture these moments.

When assessing Allahyarham Tun's contribution to national and international affairs one should therefore also not discount the important contributions he made in the increasingly vital Track Two domain.

The then Director General of the Institute Allahyarham Tan Sri Dr Noordin Sopiee developed a close and respectful partnership with Allahyarham Tun. This partnership was of utmost significance during the early years of ISIS when it was striving to establish a name for itself. The combination of a respected former Prime Minister and an outstanding thought leader proved potent. It was a blessing for the fledgling Institute.

There is also another, unique bond between ISIS Malaysia, Allahyarham Tun, his beloved wife Yang Amat Berbahagia Tun Suhaila binti Tan Sri Haji Mohamed Noah and the Noah Foundation. The premises that ISIS has occupied for over 20 years were actually the Official Residence of Tan Sri Haji Mohamed Noah when he was the first Speaker of the Dewan Rakyat.

With the Tun Hussein Onn Chair established in ISIS Malaysia and funded by the Noah Foundation, we have, in a remarkable sense, come full circle.

There is much that the country and ISIS owe to Allahyarham Tun Hussein Onn. This Chair in ISIS Malaysia is but a small token. But few things stand the test of time and are as durable as works of good scholarship.

This is what the Tun Hussein Onn Chair in ISIS Malaysia pledges to deliver.