

GRADUATION 2012

Presentation speech for Tun Mohammed Hanif Bin Omar for the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws of the University *honoris causa*

Chancellor, the track record of countries gaining their independence from Britain in the 1950s and 60s has been somewhat varied. Few would deny, however, that Malaysia has been one of the truly great successes. Since independence, Malaysia has had one of the best economic records in Asia, with GDP growing an average of 6.5% for almost 50 years. Of course, Malaysia has great advantages – its natural resources, its fine culture and traditions and, above all, the quality of its people. Yet it would be wrong to suppose that it has been easy. When Malaysia became independent in 1957, the great Malayan Emergency had only just ended and serious problems of inter-communal tensions and insurgencies remained.

In explaining this success, I think we should focus on a number of features. While it has certainly moved on from colonial times, Malaysia still does a lot of things in a rather British way. The governmental system is closely modelled on the Westminster parliamentary system and the legal and police systems have much in common with those operating in this country. These points are exemplified in the career of our Honorand. Tun Hanif Omar became an investigating officer as long ago as 1960 and was Inspector General of the Malaysian Police from 1974 to 1994, by far the longest tenure of its kind. In 1984, however, he decided to come to Britain for study Law and, what is more, he came to Buckingham, graduating with Honours in 1986. He had some illustrious predecessors, going right back to Jonathan Bayang in the first year of the University and some eminent successors too. Those of my colleagues who have visited Malaysia always stress the warmth of the welcome they received and the strong sense of loyalty and commitment to Buckingham. Tun Hanif exemplifies these qualities.

Although I am not a lawyer, one of the things that makes me most proud of our University is our role nurturing the links between the English legal system and those of other common law countries like Malaysia. Long may the

connection continue. It is good for Buckingham and I believe good for Malaysia too. Sometimes the benefits have been very practical. Thus in the middle of his final examinations Tun Hanif was called home to deal with a serious security situation. He resolved this and then in 1989 and 1990 guided the Malaysian government towards achieving a lasting peace with the Communist party of Malaya and the Sarawak Communist Organisation, thus ending 40 years of armed insurgencies. It would be nice to think that the legal skills acquired at Buckingham played at least a small part in this stunning success.

But he has done so much more – co-founder of the Asean Police Chiefs Conference, active in Interpol and the UN Crime Prevention Commission, consulted by the US and British governments on police and security issues. It is hardly surprising that in 1994 he received Malaysia's highest award – the title of Tun.

In 2005 Tun Hanif was appointed to the Royal Commission for the Enhancement and Management of the Royal Malaysia Police. He is President of the Malaysian Institute of Management and Deputy Chairman of Genting Berhad, the investment and holding and management company of the Genting Group, perhaps Malaysia's leading Corporation.

Chancellor, given your own long standing links with Malaysia, I have especial pleasure in calling on you to confer upon Tun Hanif Bin Omar, the degree of Doctor of Laws *honoris causa*.

Professor John Clarke, MA, DPhil

16 March 2012