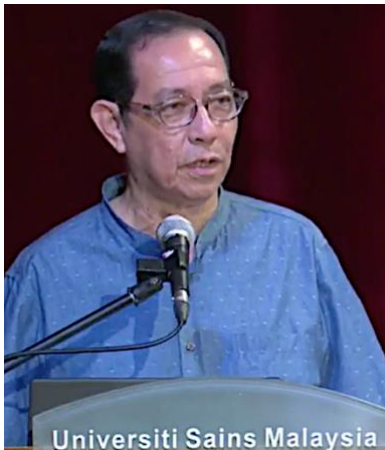


## Opening Address: Tan Sri Dzul kifli Abdul Razak



I am delighted to be here today for very many reasons. One reason is that I have benefitted so much from HAIAP over the years and of course from the Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM).

First I would like to thank HAIAP for agreeing to have USM as a host and to thank USM for agreeing to host this very auspicious occasion within the university.

Another reason I am delighted is a very selfish one as I think back 50 years to when I was a student in the 70s. I would particularly like to address my thoughts to the students who are here today.

Fifty years ago when I first stepped into this university it was just the second university in Malaysia. The first was the University of Malaya. USM was established in 1969 just after the events of May 13.<sup>1</sup>

USM is supposed to be a 'different' kind of university. The first Vice-Chancellor was the late Professor Hanzhu Sandhu who was the Dean of the Faculty of Arts.

i want to tell you a little about Prof Hanzhu because he epitomises what this university is all about. Coming from the University of Malaysia to this university he started almost everything as new and this is what became the hallmark of what this university is all about. While the University of Malaya has a Faculty system, this university has a School system - different system altogether.

The University of Malaya has colleges and residences while here we have a DESA (*desasiswa*) system - a completely different system for student residences and hostels.

While Universities are supposed to be **big**, this one is the smallest in the country. Universities are supposed to be 'modern' but this university is distinctly a 'natural' university. We are supposed to be pedestrians here - you are supposed to walk. if you are wondering why the roads are so small - too small for buses - there is no shuttling up and down - it is because this university is different.

This university introduced different schools at different times. The first schools of social sciences and humanities were born at this university. The first school of pharmaceutical sciences was born at this university; the first school of computer sciences was born at this university; the first school of mathematical sciences was born at this university; the first school of integrated medical sciences was born at this university. This university was new from the ground up and everything we learnt from this university was also different.

I was a science student and I was only supposed to do 70% of my subject in sciences - the rest must be non-science. We learnt about integration of knowledge and a multidisciplinary approach when we stepped into this university.

But there was another problem when we stepped into this university when we enrolled in the school of pharmaceutical sciences. To spell pharmaceutical sciences is very difficult and it has a different meaning to different people. The simple word is pharmacy but even that word has a different meaning to different people. I remember the newspaper that talked about how we were going to have a new group of farmers that would produce new agricultural products - and we were called FARMERS. We were supposed to produce something that was different from the products of the usual agricultural industry. Some people saw us as the ones who read palms - PALMISTRY. Nobody knew what pharmacy is all about. And here was i - supposed to be a pharmacist.

The first thing we needed to do was educate ourselves on what pharmacy is all about and how it relates to our life and to our career. And this is where we found a second university in this island of Penang - a hotbed of activism. We found the kind of people like Hanzhu Sandhu. There were and are plenty of them outside our university: The late President of Consumers Action of Penang (CAP) - the late Uncle SM Idris, Dato' Seri Anwar Fazal, current CAP president Mohideen Abdul Kader. There are many that I get in touch with consistently. All this tells me that this university alone is not the university of my choice. and what do I mean by that? This university will not bring me to the heart of the community if I don't spend my time with

---

<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/13\\_May\\_incident](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/13_May_incident)

the community. I can be in the library, I can be in the lab, I can be anywhere else. I want to do what I am supposed to do as a good student but I will miss a whole chunk of what life is about - life in the community.

The people that I as a pharmacist am supposed to serve are in the community - people that I do not know. These are the people that need the knowledge that I have. What is it about? It is about medicines they are deprived of - essential medicines. Habibah talked about essential medicines. I learnt about essential medicines outside the classroom - not in the classroom. I learnt about rational use of medicines from HAIAP - not in my classroom.

There are many concepts that relate to the 'real life' of people that were not taught in my classroom, so I find that HAIAP is very significant for me. It has changed my whole way of thinking and the way I look at things - bringing me to where I am today. It is because of HAIAP that I am where I am today. I am not saying that USM is not doing its job - it is but it is not adequately serviced and therefore the meeting of USM and HAIAP is what life is all about.

An academic's life is about research and publications and doing all the things we have been doing but sometimes I ask myself 'are these relevant to the people outside?' I might publish in a journal that is ranked Number 1. and I have an impact of Number 10. But how does that impact factor of 10 translate into the community I am trying to serve? it means nothing! That is why I think that work we do today must bridge academic life and real life. This concept has been very significant when we think of the pandemic. It tells me education is not about livelihood. Education must be about life.

We are so busy trying to feather our nests - making 'success' the way people see us and what material goods we have. And we forget what life is all about - the intangibles that we can never measure. The pandemic tells us that at the end of the day, the intangibles that we cannot measure are what really matter.

During the pandemic you can have a lot of money but if you cannot move and there is nothing to spend money on - because everything is closed down - then your money means nothing. This is when you find that the community is what makes a difference. At least in the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) where I am now there is a community that gives us all the opportunities we need to serve them to make sure everyone is looked after; and where you see that no-one is left behind. During the pandemic we have really tested our conviction that everyone must be taken into account in an inclusive manner.

That was not taught in our classrooms. I was taught that if you have two products that are the same, you must sell the one that has the highest profit margin so you can make enough profit to enrich yourself so you can be called 'successful' - although spiritually you are probably among the poorest of the poor.

So this is a meeting of not just technical scenery, about scientific sciences, it is about human sciences at the same time. And I do hope the students today will pay particular attention and I do hope you will use the platform called HAIAP to transform your lives as you move forward.

I think the time has come that the world is in a very sorry state. If you don't transform the way you look at life, all the education you have gone through will be meaningless.

I will share with you an example: this whole question of vaporised nicotine being removed from the poisons list is something that is very shocking and we are fighting against it with the Ministry and with the government. What does it do?

Nicotine used to be listed in the poisons List and only people over 18 years of age could buy it. But from April 1 it was made available to **everyone** because at that time the Ministry of Health believed it could be de-listed.

Just two hours ago I got a report from colleagues working on the ground who had found that children under 10 years old were using this vaporised nicotine and facing many serious problems - seizures, muscle spasms, depression - all those things they would be protected from if this poison remained on the list.

We are supposed to be able to protect people that need to be protected because we have the knowledge and we have the power. But I see very little protection in the country today.

We were supposed to deal with this vapourised nicotine issue in the parliament in May. Now it is postponed to June. Very soon we will find that a lot more of the youngsters who are innocently seduced are using these poisons.

The reason this government has gone this way is that they want to collect taxes from the sale of nicotine. To make money from someone's misery is a crime. Together we must fight this crime to ensure that students, and everyone else that needs to be protected, will be protected. We will be the custodians. Therefore I am repeating this message that to those of us with USM, IIUM, TWN and HAIAP - and everyone else - is of paramount importance.

Now I want to remember those who have left us: the late Zafrullah Chowdhury - a true icon himself; the late Professor Balasubramaniam - a great teacher of mine; the late Shila Kaur who worked for many years with HAIAP; and I must not miss the late Uma Ramaswamy Iyer who served tirelessly and with dedication with Uncle SM Idris in CAP for more that 30 years. These people are gone. Soon we will be gone. What we leave behind us is what we hope will survive to help make society move forward better and I hope we will start today.

Thank you very much for presence. Thank you very much for your commitment and I hope we can stay together as a group. Thank you.