

DG'S SPEECH
GRADUATION CEREMONY

(Salutations)

This is a very peculiar world that we now live in. We are grappling with the restrictions placed upon us and the world at large due to the pandemic that is CoVid-19 but we are also experiencing for ourselves the impact of hundreds of years of neglect on the planet has wrought, with the alert on climate change and extreme weather occurrences.

2. As if that wasn't enough, we are today marking another historic milestone – KL City's win after a 32 year hiatus, in the *Piala Malaysia*, or Malaysia Cup, and against JDT no-less! The world, indeed, is now a peculiar place.

Ladies and gentlemen, honored guests,

3. On behalf of the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations (IDFR), I thank you for your collective presence here today. We appreciate the fact that you took time from your one-day off-day to be here with us, to celebrate the 43 young men and women who have completed their initial diplomatic training.

4. The graduates of DiD 1/2021 and 2/2021 should be applauded – they have managed to successfully complete an intensive diplomatic programme in spite of the uncertain world that we find ourselves in. That the programme was still able to be conducted is due in no small part to the tenacity and diligence of the course coordinators who adapted components of the programme to allow for online instructions to take place. In this, they were aided by the team of individuals and consultants that made up the training cadre, who were also able to adapt quickly.

5. Media mogul Rupert Murdoch is quoted as saying that “The world is changing very fast. Big will not beat small anymore. It will be the fast beating the slow”. Ironic words indeed coming from a man who made his billions from the publishing industry. Our world has changed significantly; these days it is no longer about change but about how fast we can change.

6. In this, I believe that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs already has an advantage. Each and every officer and staff member of the Ministry is used to change. We undergo change every three years or so. We not only change our work place, or where we go to work, but we also change ourselves to fit the desk and task to which we are assigned. Our average turnaround time, or the time it takes us to pick up a totally new subject in a new surrounding can be as little as two weeks to as long as three months. When we say we can hit the ground running, we really mean it. I have seen colleagues who, within a few days of taking office have had to handle high level visits or big meetings. We thrive on challenge the way no other officers do.

7. No other service can boast of the same agile ability. Sometimes it takes officers of other cadres nearly a year to adjust to change, very rarely does any other service quickly adapt as we do.

8. Enough about what we are. Let's look to what we as diplomats should be. Let's look to what kind of diplomat your Ministry, your senior officers, the institute and of course, I myself, expect you to be. But before that, for the cohort 1 and 2 of 2021, you have not only undergone a change in the way the programme was run but also witnessed the passing of the baton from one director general to another. So in keeping with all the 'firsts' that we have already gone through, may I now invite Ambassador Datuk Mohd Zamruni Khalid to share the stage.

(Video montage)

Thank you Zam.

Dear DiD participants,

9. You have often heard me talking about the need to be a 'sponge' – for lack of a better word or a better simile. These are the formative years of your career, so you should seize the opportunity to learn as much as you can, see as much as you can, experience all that you can. Tan Sri KSU said that you should be hungry for knowledge, and I concur – the inquisitive mind is a habit; if you teach yourself that you can subsist on a diet of not

knowing, then that will be your habit in years to come. You will know only what you choose to know and nothing else. But the diplomat with an inquisitive mind, a mind that is cultivated to want to know, to want to find out, will be able to excel in whatever he or she chooses to do. That diplomat will not be constrained by only one field, or one subject matter, but will be able to speak confidently and with knowledge on any given number of subjects. The numbers add up. If you learn only one thing each day, in a year you would have already built up 365 things to choose from when you need to talk to someone outside your comfort zone.

10. The versatile diplomat should not be afraid of change. Constantly testing the boundaries of what is possible inevitably leads to progress. When I say testing the boundaries, I am not talking of challenging those boundaries. As diplomats, we must also recognize that every action we take has its consequences. So testing the boundaries mean that we know what the possible consequences, fall-out or risk will be.

11. The Institute has done its best to give you as good a foundation as it can in your journey on this career path of ours. Growing up, I always wanted to be an ambassador. But I didn't know that Malaysian career ambassadors are as good as they are because they have come up through rank and file; they have been there, done that, and in their long journey towards the ambassadorship they would have learnt a thing or two about diplomacy.

My dear DiD graduates,

12. Before I go off-tangent, I would like to leave you with a piece of advice – one that has served me well in my own career. Always do things with the proper perspective: for the good of the country. We are officers entrusted to ensure the Amanah of the rakyat. On our shoulders lie a huge burden and an even bigger responsibility. The tagline of “Menanggung Amanah” is not just a tagline. It is our nawaitu. Looking around, I am confident that all of you will rise to the challenges of tomorrow and reach even higher heights.

Distinguished parents, guardians and family members,

13. You should be proud of the achievements of your respective DiD graduate. They have come far, and learnt so much to be where they are now. But I know that the best is yet to come.

Thank you.