

Professor Day,

Today we are honouring a man who over an impressive and influential career, has made a significant contribution to the establishment and growth of Iskander Malaysia, particularly through his key role in directing and guiding the creation and development of EduCity@Iskander.

Datuk Ir. Khairil Anwar Ahmad is a registered professional engineer who graduated with a Civil and Environmental Engineering degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the United States of America. He also holds an MBA from the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow. Datuk began his career in engineering, but his business acumen led him to seek out a development position at Kinta Kellas plc, following which he spent ten years at the Malaysia Building Society, holding several senior positions including Head of the Asset Restructuring Department of the Risk Management Division.

In 2007, he began his long and productive association with Iskander Investment Berhad, where he was initially tasked with setting up the Procurement and Contract Administration department. Six months later, his boss called him into her office, gave him a blank piece of paper and said, “our development plan needs an education hub.” Reflecting on this moment, Khairil recalled that he “was a bit horrified as I’d never done an education hub before.” Nevertheless, he willingly accepted the commission and as Senior

Vice-President, Education & Healthcare, set about devising a vision and strategy to inform the development of the impressive 300-acre site that was to become the multi-varsity education hub now known as EduCity.

Our first dialogue with Datuk was in 2006, when plans were broached to establish a branch of Newcastle University's Medical School in Malaysia. This was a major new venture for us and to bring the project to fruition, we needed to build relationships with key stakeholders including the Ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of Health, the Malaysian Qualifications Agency and the Malaysian Medical Council. Datuk's support and advice was invaluable and without his wise guidance, it is very unlikely that we would have been able to establish our NUMed Campus. The formal agreement to establish a branch of our Medical School in Malaysia was signed in 2009 and we welcomed our first students in 2011.

Newcastle was the first occupant of the EduCity site and Khairil went on to negotiate successful investment and partnership agreements with several other international institutions including the University of Southampton, University of Southern California, University of Reading, the Raffles Education Corporation Singapore and the Johan Cruyff Institute Barcelona. The creation of EduCity 1.0 owes much of its success to Khairil's characteristic blend of vision combined with a deeply practical approach to navigating the regulatory

framework and building relationships with multiple stakeholders. Everyone involved in the planning and development of NUMed will always be grateful for Khairil's help and support, and would like to thank him for his contribution to the successful launch of NUMed as a branch campus of Newcastle University.

Like any new venture, the early days of EduCity 1.0 were exciting, but not without a few fraught moments. Reflecting on the opening of NUMed, Khairil recalls welcoming the very first NUMed student to the campus, a young American student who was delighted to be studying in Malaysia and looking forward to commencing his medical studies. When Khairil arrived next day to take the student out to lunch, he was horrified to see that his face and arms were covered in mosquito bites: "Oh man, my first student on campus gets dengue fever and that's the end of my campus" Fortunately, all ended well, and like NUMed itself, the student went on to flourish.

As the multi-varsity campus became more established it was felt there was a need to improve the offering to students, particularly around sport and leisure facilities. When Iskander Investment Berhad made a substantial amount of money available to build a sports stadium, Khairil again rose to the challenge, observing that , " it's not every day you get to build a stadium!" He is firmly committed to providing outstanding educational facilities for the young

people of Malaysia and values the opportunities that sport offer to develop discipline, teamwork and commitment – all skills which will help them to flourish in their professional lives.

In 2012, Khairil was promoted to Chief Operating Officer of Iskander Investment Berhad, and subsequently became its President and Chief Executive Officer. Under his capable leadership, EduCity 2.0 continues to flourish, bringing in new partners for tertiary and secondary/primary school education. In addition to his work with EduCity, Khairil has led several initiatives in Iskander Puteri including a mixed-income housing mega project, a Drone and Robotic Zone, and Iskander NEXT, a platform for private-public partnerships to enable the digital economy to flourish.

Looking back on his long and successful career, Khairil can be proud of his many achievements and his positive influence on the development of Iskander Puteri and its vibrant economy cannot be overstated. Alongside his busy professional life, Khairil also undertakes voluntary work with the Malaysian Medical Relief Society. He retired from Iskander Investment Berhad at the end of last year, and hopefully now has more time to pursue his own sport and leisure interests. Perhaps he will catch up on his reading, and as he was a keen rugby player in his youth, have more time to follow this along with other sports. Khairil's daughter, Nor Juliana Johan studied Medicine at NUMed,

where she also met her husband Muhammad Lufti Maganran, and we hope that this happy and fortuitous juxtaposition of personal and professional interests will help to promote happy memories of his time supporting the establishment of NuMed.

Professor Day, in recognition of his outstanding professional achievements, particularly regarding the creation of EduCity, and in gratitude for his invaluable support and advice to our NUMed colleagues, I present to you Datuk Ir. Khairil Anwar Ahmad for the award of Doctor of Civil Law, *honoris causa*.

John Williams, Public Orator, July 2023