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PIC BY SAIFULLIZAN TAMADI



## TENACIOUS DAIM

THE 81-year-old gets a PhD after spending 11 years researching the impact of the New Economic Policy.

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## PERSEVERANCE

## DAIM GETS PHD 11 YEARS LATER

Ex-finance minister, 81, advises people to pursue lifelong learning

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**T**UN Daim Zainuddin has proved that persistence at any age will pay off.

At 81, the former finance minister and former Council of Eminent Persons (CEP) chairman obtained a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree from Universiti Malaya after working on his thesis for 11 years.

He received his doctorate from UM Chancellor Sultan of Perak Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah during the first session of the university's 59th convocation at Dewan Tunku Canselor yesterday.

Despite having to deal with deteriorating health due to his age, Daim said he could never let go of his dream.

"At my age, I fall sick easily. When I enrolled in the programme, I could walk just fine. But I have finally earned my doctorate and I now need a walking stick," he said.

His thesis, "The Implementation of the New Economic Policy: Success and Failure, 1970-2008", was published by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

Present at the convocation were his wife, Naimah Khalid, five children, six grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

Daim said he decided to enrol in the country's oldest university and pursue the subject as it was relevant to his work.

"For the thesis, I was required to do a lot of research. In a way, this helped me with my (political and economic) speeches and allowed me to come up with a publication as well," he said.

"The best place to do this research is at the university because it has complete facilities, with a comprehensive library, well-rounded supervisors and research assistants."

The convocation saw 6,562 graduates receiving their scrolls, including 477 doctorate, 2,026 master's and 2,965 bachelor's degrees. The remaining were diploma graduates.

Daim said people should continue to seek knowledge for as long as they live.

"Only through knowledge we can achieve success. Knowledge



Doctor of Philosophy graduate Tun Daim Zainuddin (centre) and Royal Education Award recipients Muhammad Madhi Mohd Budiman (left) and Lau Win Yei at Universiti Malaya's 59th convocation in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. PIC BY SAIFULLIZAN TAMADI

must be put to good use. It should not be used for negative things and should be applied whenever we want to give an opinion and analyse any situation."

He expressed gratitude to everyone at UM who helped him with his studies, including supervisors and members of the faculty for giving him the opportunity to do his research part-time.

Daim said a challenge he faced in completing his doctorate was when supervisors asked him to give dates for historical events mentioned in his research.

In his study, he discovered that while there were a lot of successes from the New Economic Policy (NEP), there were also failures.

"We must learn not to repeat the failures and as for the successes, we must use each one of them to our advantage."

In Malaysia, Daim said, it was not only the Bumiputeras who faced poverty.

"Poverty does not depend on race," he said.

He reiterated the point raised by Sultan Nazrin that Malaysia probably had the highest number of educated people in Asia, if not the world.

In his speech, Sultan Nazrin said data showed that about 100,000 graduates were produced every year since NEP ended in 1990, so within 30 years, Malaysia would have produced about three million graduates.

To gain knowledge, Daim advised youth to switch off their gadgets and go back to school.

He said when NEP began in 1971, it generated a lot of interest from a lot of people who wanted to know more about it.

"Other countries have adopted some parts of the NEP in their policies."

He said his studies had allowed him to put on record, through publication, the achievements and failures of the policy in an academic manner.

He said agencies tasked with implementing new policies could refer to the published study to gain better insights and avoid past mistakes.

He said the policy was formulated in a different socio-economic era and might not be the best policy for the country now.

One of his supervisors, Associate Professor Dr Hamidin Ab-

dul Hamid, said Daim went to UM twice a week to do his research and have discussions.

"The experience of supervising Daim on his thesis was valuable. Although he was my student, I learnt a lot from him as well because he was involved with NEP (as finance minister).

"Together, we formulated a way for Daim to put together his ideas in a structured manner, which is relevant in academic writing.

"Most of the time, Daim worked on his own. His knowledge of the NEP and the country's economy is so vast that we had to categorise and arrange it according to the needs of the thesis."

On Daim's 11-year PhD journey, Hamidin said the tenacity to take more than 10 years to complete a doctorate was uncommon and he expressed joy that Daim finally completed his studies.

Sultan Nazrin, in his speech, said the university was not only responsible for students' education but also in building their character.

"Students will face the real world after graduation and should be equipped with strong values,

namely ethics, morals, accountability and integrity."

He said the image of a university could be tarnished if graduates committed crimes, such as taking bribes.

He reminded graduates to uphold their honour and their family's good name.

He expressed hope for graduates to be guided by and remain on the right path to achieve happiness in this world and in the afterlife.

At the convocation, UM conferred an honorary Doctor of Laws degree on Tan Sri Dr Rafiah Salim and the title of Emeritus Professor on Professor Dr Phang Siew Moi, Professor Dr Mohd Ali Hashim and Professor Datuk Dr Tan Chong Tin.

Recipients of the Royal Education Award were Muhammad Madhi Mohd Budiman (Bachelor of Muamalat Management) and Lau Win Yei (Bachelor of Quantity Surveying), while the Vice-Chancellor's Awards were given to Chow Wan Yong (Diploma in Business Management) and Norull Adlila Alias (Executive Diploma in Management — Administration and Operations).