A very good afternoon to everyone.

First of all, on behalf of Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, I would like to welcome our guest of honour, YB Dato’ Dr. Hou Kok Chung, Deputy Minister of Higher Education Malaysia, and Madam Kay Kuok, Trustee and Deputy Chairman of the Kuok Foundation Berhad, and other distinguished delegates from Kuok Foundation Berhad to this signing ceremony of the agreement between UTAR and Kuok Foundation Berhad to establish the Tan Sri Dato’ Philip Kuok Hock Khee Professorial Chair in Agricultural Science at UTAR Petaling Jaya Campus.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The agreement UTAR and Kuok Foundation is going to sign in a moment will formally initiate an important milestone for UTAR, that is the establishment of Tan Sri Dato’ Philip Kuok Hock Khee Professorial Chair in Agricultural Science.

The professorial or endowed chair will not be a reality without the generous donation of RM3 million from Kuok Foundation, a not-for-profit charitable institution, which has been contributing benevolently for the advancement of education and the alleviation of poverty through education since its inception in 1970.

The donation for the endowed chair is thus in line with the philanthropist mission of the Foundation to advance education.

The endowed chair is in honour of the late Tan Sri Dato’ Philip Kuok Hock Khee, the eldest of the eminent Kuok brothers who was also the former chairman and trustee of Kuok Foundation. Besides being a far-sighted entrepreneur, and a distinguished diplomat, philanthropist, patriot and a firm believer in Malaysia’s multiracial makeup, Tan Sri Dato’ Philip Kuok was also an agriculturist. The endowed chair in Agricultural Science fits part of his interests and is therefore appropriate for honouring part of Tan Sri’s greatness. Of course, the full greatness of Tan Sri can hardly be fully honoured by any means.

Ladies and gentlemen,

UTAR was founded with a vision to be a premier university in the region. In UTAR’s pursuit to achieve its vision to be a premier university, it strives to excel in the creation, preservation and dissemination of knowledge. Thus, research, being the source of new knowledge, is central to the mission of the University and to the Nation as our country strives towards the transformation into a high-income nation.

For a research to reap its harvest, it takes great effort, commitment, time and substantial funding. I am glad to highlight that this Chair would enable the appointment of an excellent expert to lead research and development in the area of Agricultural Science. The Chair aims to achieve multi-faceted objectives. Among the objectives are to carry out, develop and achieve excellence in the research, development, education and training in the field of Agricultural Science, to promote
exchange of technical expertise, to facilitate and organise a range of activities in advancing the Agricultural Science industry, to collaborate with government, industry and organisations in the promotion of Agricultural Science in the nation and to establish and complement a stronger pool of expertise consisting of both academia and industrial representatives in the field of Agricultural Science.

For your information, this Professorial Chair will be established at the Faculty of Science in UTAR Perak Campus. The establishment of the Chair is indeed timely as the University intends to embark on a new programme, Bachelor of Science (Hons) Agricultural Science, under this Faculty. Recently, the University has submitted to the Ministry of Higher Education for approval to conduct this programme.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Agricultural Science is a multidisciplinary field that encompasses various essential aspects of agriculture and agronomy. Agriculture involves the application of techniques and management of resources for the sustainable production of animals and plants for human consumption. On the other hand, agronomy is the incorporation of research and development to study and improve plant-based agriculture. Students pursuing the Agricultural Science programme would be introduced to the fundamental scientific concepts of agricultural production in order to understand the current issues faced by the industry and to develop new technologies to assess and improve the various agricultural sectors.

The introduction of a degree in Agricultural Science is in line with our government’s plan to develop the agricultural sector as one of the key engine of growth. Under the 10th Malaysia Plan, the agriculture sector is expected to grow at an annual rate of up to 3.3%, and to achieve a 6.6% share in GDP by 2015. To achieve high-value added agriculture activities during the 10MP, our country requires a pool of highly skilled and highly trained Agricultural Science graduates and researchers to move the economy up the value chain by improving the production and processing of high-value agriculture and agro-based commodities and to contribute to the GDP by increasing the production of agricultural new sources of growth such as deep-sea fishing, seaweed, ornamental fish, and herbs and spices.

In addition to serving the national need for skilled manpower with expertise in agriculture and agro-based industries, the Agricultural Science programme could also serve the manpower needs of the Northern Corridor Economic Region (NCER) which encompasses the states of Perak, Kedah, Penang and Perlis in careers related to modern commercial scale farming, production of higher yielding plant clones, better animal breeds, disease-resistant fish and shrimp larvae, R&D, agrotechnology industries, technology-driven food production, downstream agriculture activities and environmental protection.

As a University that respond to the needs of the nation, UTAR has also initiated a series of Agriculture Technology Seminar which has received good response from the industries. So far, two of such seminars have been organised with the discussion on topics such as “Boosting Crop Yield” and “Sustainable Aquaculture and Management of Aquatic Resources”.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, UTAR is able to reach this milestone of our journey due to the cumulative support consolidated by the public, individuals and corporations, who recognize the value of education and the transforming power of knowledge. In fact, the strong support from Kuok Foundation
touches every aspect of UTAR’s development since day one of our establishment. Among the numerous support extended to UTAR are the contribution of RM10 million for the initial establishment of UTAR; a capital donation of RM500,000 to establish UTAR-Kuok Foundation Student Loan in 2002; award of research grant amounting to RM260,000 to fund an on-going research project on Chikungunya in January 2010 and contribution of RM10 million to set up the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences - the first 5 million of which was given in 2010, and the next 5 million will be given in 2011.

While the monetary donation is a definite measurable quantum, the confidence and trust the Kuok Foundation has on the ability of the University to deliver is definitely immeasurable. For that, on behalf of the University, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to Kuok Foundation for the generous contribution of RM3 million, and the confidence and trust they have on us.

I would also like to assure Kuok Foundation here that, UTAR will be their industrious partner who is committed to deliver what it is entrusted for.

Founded in 2002, with the first batch of only 411 students, today, less than a decade after, UTAR has a student population of over 19,000 and an alumni body of over 22,000 strong. This clearly shows that as a teaching university, UTAR is widely accepted by the Malaysian public.

The University’s initiation towards achieving the status of a research university has met with the support from our dedicated faculty members, who have taken on wholeheartedly the new paradigm of embracing research imperative as their way of life.

They constantly maintain close rapport with fellow colleagues from other disciplines with the objective to cross-fertilise their ideas to spark a series of inter- and multidisciplinary research themes that are of emerging relevance and importance to Malaysian economic transformation programme in this ever changing world.

To facilitate achieving research objectives, the University’s internal funding has long included an annual UTAR Research Fund allocation which is used as seed money for research projects. The annual fund is sponsoring over 250 start-up research projects at the moment. Another RM5 million has been approved for 2011.

In addition, UTAR has also received external funding, totalling RM14.3 million, for over 120 research projects. Research grants secured in the past one year, besides those from the Kuok Foundation, also included those from JobStreet.com Sdn Bhd, Malaysia Toray Science Foundation, Ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, and Sumitomo Foundation.

R&D funds have been secured in a myriad of fields in collaboration with external partners including government agencies such as Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation or MOSTI, Ministry of Energy, Green Technology and Water, Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, Academy of Sciences Malaysia, National Cancer Council Malaysia and Forest Research Institute Malaysia; NGOs such as Tomistoma Task Force, World Wide Fund or WWF, and Huaren Education Foundation; and business corporations such as Agilent Technologies, Altera Corporation, Cisco Systems, Inc., Intel Corporation, and Microsoft Corporation from the USA, MIMOS Berhad and Brunsfield Group of Malaysia, and Eu Yan Sang Group, Singapore; to name a few.
The university has set up 20 research centres that conduct research in various fields such as Arts, Business and Finance, Creativity, Management, Social Science and Science and Technology, which are important to the Malaysian economic transformation programme.

In addition, UTAR has also established the UTAR Global Research Network – a platform for UTAR faculty members to network, for research purposes, with academics, researchers and technologists from all over the world. Currently, 29 such international collaborative partners have been appointed in the network.

Of course, there are also seven endowed chairs established since May 2009, which are:

- Tan Sri Dato’ Sri Dr. Teh Hong Piow Chair in Banking and Finance
- SP Setia Professor of Environmental Engineering and Green Technology
- The Star Foundation Professor of Creative Industries
- Sin Heap Lee Professor of Construction Management
- Datuk and Datin Tan Kim Leong Professor of Medicine
- Brunsfield Professor of Civil Engineering
- Mr. and Mrs. Chua Chai Leng Professor of Economics

With the signing of the agreement shortly afterwards, the eighth endowed chair, the Tan Sri Dato’ Philip Kuok Professorial Chair in Agricultural Science will be established.

I would like to once again express my gratitude to Kuok Foundation for this benevolent donation to establish the endowed chair.

It is my hope that all the objectives of our joint forces will be realized in due time and that this Chair will chart new strategic directions in research and development in the field of Agricultural Science.

I would also like to thank the guest of honour, YB Dato’ Dr. Hou Kok Chung, Deputy Minister of Higher Education Malaysia, and Madam Kay Kuok, Trustee and Deputy Chairman of Kuok Foundation Berhad, and other distinguished delegates from Kuok Foundation Berhad for your gracious presence in this ceremony.

Thank you.