

SPEECH BY: YAB Dato' Seri Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad Prime Minister

EVENT: The occasion of the inauguration of the United Nations Asian and Pacific Development Centre (APDC)

VENUE: Kuala Lumpur

DATE: 17 Aug 1981

TIME:

It is a great honour for me to be invited to inaugurate the United Nations Asian and Pacific Development Centre (APDC) and to address this distinguished gathering today. I take this opportunity to thank the APDC for the kind invitation and to thank you all for the warm welcome.

I am sure a lot of efforts have gone into this project. In particular, let me congratulate and extend a special word of thanks to the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for their collaboration in setting up the Centre. As a Malaysian I am very happy that the Centre is sited in Kuala Lumpur. Besides being a great honour for us the Centre could also play an important role with regard to our development.

The APDC, I understand, is the result of integrating four previously existing regional institutions of development research and training. Such a reorganisation can only be expected to result in greater efficiency and effectiveness. It is my hope that the Centre will effectively serve the region. The Centre should not only be an institution which provides intellectual leadership but also an institution which is pragmatic in dealing with the realities of our region with its diverse components. It must address itself to the problems confronting the countries of Asia and the Pacific, particularly the less developed ones.

It is a fact that rapid development need not necessarily constitute orderly change and that planned change need not necessarily result in the expected. Development and change are a result of many inter-related factors. Some of these factors are unknown to us and some others are still beyond our adequate understanding. Development, which is a dream of all countries, therefore, has a dimension of uncertainty and risk. Development research and training which are closely related activities relevant to development must be upgraded to meet our needs so that we can better plan and implement our development, better understand the impact of our policies and efforts, and be in a better position to correct our course of action.

I am happy to note that a major goal of the Centre is to strengthen national development training and research institutions. The participation by national institutions in the Centre's activities can be an important programme for achieving this goal. However, adequate care must be exercised by both the Centre and the national institutions to ensure that this approach will enhance the role and impact of the national institutions in their respective countries. It is only appropriate that I mention this since it is possible that the role of national institutions could be reduced to that of mainly supporting the international institution instead of being mutually supportive. I believe that for such a mutually supportive role to develop the Centre must also give adequate attention to the needs

and desire of the national institutions to upgrade their capabilities.

Developing countries are indeed lacking in development oriented research. There are many reasons which contribute to this situation. The lack of development orientation on the part of national research institutions, the lack of experience and competent local researchers, and the lack of conducive research environment and incentives for local researchers are some of them. Many developing countries, therefore, become the focus of attention by foreign researchers mainly scholars who are researching for their Masters or doctoral degrees or, otherwise having intentions which may be questionable as when they try to prove that developing countries are inherently incapable of development. It is in this light that national institutions must take greater interest in research and build their own research capability. Positive steps must also be taken to bring research institutions closer together so that research projects are better coordinated, duplication and wastage avoided, and research results better utilised for policy formulation and decision making. Greater efforts must be made to ensure that research institutions are manned by qualified, experienced and research-interested personnel and that proper and conducive research environment provided.

Training institutions have an important role in development. While the overall education system provides the basis for the manpower supply for development, training institutions cater for the specifics. While the overall education system provides knowledge, training institutions normally emphasize skills. However, given the fact that development is normative - in other words, preference for a better state of well-being, it is important that manpower for development is injected with appropriate moral and ethical contents. Knowledge and skills must, in the interest of sound development be utilized within the context of a preferred moral and ethical framework which again must not be alien to the particular society.

It is in the context of this moral and ethical contents that development training institutions must give adequate attention. It is also important that they must develop effective methods for imparting this important subject. It is my opinion that this moral and ethical component must be an integral part of knowledge and skills and we must utilize and develop the technology in order to ensure that development training institutions can effectively address themselves to the challenges of development.

I am happy that the initial phase of the Centre's work comprises studies in the areas of energy, food security, human resources and women in development. These four areas are significant and are current to the countries in Asia and the Pacific.

It is not my intention to dwell in detail on these subjects today. They are important topics. Seminars and conferences at the national, regional and international levels have been held and various researches have been carried out with respect to them. What is important now is an agenda for action and the will to act not only by each national Government but also by the world community. We can no longer regard many of our problems today as specific to a particular country or region. The future prosperity of a country is very dependent on the other countries as much as the problem or potential destruction of a country is dependent on the other countries. This inter-dependence must be viewed as an asset for the good and prosperity of all and not as an opportunity and a framework for

manipulation and oppression by the stronger nations.

The topics covered in the work-plan of the APDC describe some of the main concerns of the Government of Malaysia and presumably the Governments of the other countries in the region. While the solutions to the specific problems should, of course, be found locally within each particular country, a sharing of expertise and experience within a framework of regional co-operation such as the ASEAN could promote more consistent approaches and more efficient policies. It is, however, necessary that regional and sub-regional co-operation endeavours be coordinated against the international perspective of equity, justice and growth, such as the one enshrined in the New International Economic Order.

I am confident that with the necessary support the APDC would be able to contribute positively to the development policies of the countries of Asia and Pacific. I hope that it would enjoy long years of service to the countries as well as their full support in the implementation of its activities.

I am now have great pleasure in formally inaugurating the APDC and wishing it every success.