SPEECH BY THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AT THE SYMPOSIUM ON SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL RESEARCH'S DINNER AT MALAYSIA HOTEL ON 3RD FEBRUARY 1967

Mr. Chairman,
Hon'ble Minister(s)
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am surprised that you, some hundred Scientists have, at the culmination of your successful Symposium, invited me, a *politician* to be your guest at dinner tonight, because, in most countries in the world, scientists have a *silent contempt* for politicians!

Historically, I believe this contempt dates back to the time that Scientists invented an *aeroplane* that could travel *faster than sound,* but now things are *equal* because there are in the world today politicians who can make *sound* travel *faster* than *aeroplanes!*

Secondly, the scientific appproach to politicians is that they are *not* infallible. So, let us get the record straight!

If the politician is not infallible, neither is a Scientist!

Let me quote you an example of the non-infallibility of science.

I understand, recently there was a computer, or what you might call an *electronic brain* invented by scientists in America, and this machine was designed to translate at speed any given sentence, in any language, into any other language!

When it was tested, the intention was to feed in an English sentence, convert it into Russian, and finally retranslate it into our National language, Malay. The words fed into this electronic brain was a well-known English expression: "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak".

When the final result came out of this Computer, and this shows where scientists can make mistakes, the translation of this expression in Malay came out like this: "Vodka bagus, akan tetapi, daging busuk (tak baik)".

So, therefore, gentlemen, let us start this evening on the understanding that both politician and scientist - we have one thing in common, - neither of us are infallible!

In fact, there is a similarity between our functions.

The role of the Scientist is to harness the forces of science, the forces of nature and the advanced knowledge of technology to make the world a better place for our people to live in.

Similarly, the role of the politician is to harness the opinions, the thinking and the energies of our people in order to make the fullest use of the discoveries of science, so that we can go forward - scientists, politicians, and our people, towards a better way of life, a better world, better in every respect than was enjoyed by our fore-fathers.

Let me enlarge on this theme. Our aim, in modern Malaysia, whether we be scientists or politicians or the ordinary layman in the street, must be to make, to harness, and to use, to the *fullest extent,* the most modern knowledge available in the world to the benefit of the progress of our people.

I firmly believe that although both Malaysia and Singapore are young nations, there is nevertheless, a tremendous future for us and a great future for our children and grand children provided we view the process of development in a modern context.

That modern context, to my mind, is the ability to make the fullest use of new discoveries and modern ideas, the results of research, and apply them to our development and to our way of life.

This does not mean that we entirely discard the past, but it does mean that we analyse the traditions of the past and accept and retain *such* traditional ideas which are still of value, and at the same time, superimpose on our traditions of the past, a new layer, a new blood and a new thinking which can be only derived from scientific research.

This, your second successful Symposium, is a very definite step in the right direction towards the achievement of making the maximum use of science, in so much that in your meetings, over the last few days, research workers in both the academic field, and in government came together, dicussed together, thought together, exchanges views and ideas together.

Research workers in the academic field, more often than not, concentrate on the basic or fundamental aspects of Science, while those engaged in *government* service and *private industry* tend to be more *applied* in their research and more concerned with immediate application of their research results.

The bringing together of representatives in these two fields for a double advantage, in that University research workers can gauge the most appropriate fields for long term study which could lead eventually to practical applications in our environment, and their studies in this field will also influence the nature of their teaching which they pass on to their students.

Applied Scientists working in other sectors, in term are able to enlarge their thinking, better appreciate their individual contributions to the total research academics of the country and relate their work to the longer term research projects which *only* the academic scientist is often able to pursue.

Although I myself am a laymen, I now fully appreciate not only the value of such a Symposium, but also the need for turning this sort of thing into something more permanent in the form of a National Scientific Research Council.

Such a National Scientific Research Council would, I hope, become part of the driving force of modern Malaysia - as I mentioned earlier - and help us to put to the fullest use for the development of our country, the latest discoveries and up-to-date knowledge of science.

I firmly believe that a developing nation such as Malaysia can, by applying the most modern methods and knowledge available to it, skip a few generations and catch up with the so-called developed and matured nations of the world.

However, we cannot, with the greatest stretch of imagination, expect to develop quickly if we plod on with old ways, old ideas and old methods. We have got to utilise our scientists, and we have got to make the fullest use of *all,* I repeat *all,* scientific knowledge available to us.

But, to achieve this, we have got to aim firstly, at more cohesive thinking. The instruments of such cohesive thinking is in fact, a National Scientific Research Council which can channel new thoughts and new ideas on scientific progress both to our government and to our people.

The terms of reference of such a Scientific Research Council woule be:-

- to co-ordinate research programmes being conducted in universities and other institutions of higher learning, in Government departments and agencies, and where possible, in industries;
- to advise the Government on policy matters concerning science and technology;
- to advise the Government on the allocation of funds for scientific and industrial research;
- to give independent scientific advice on such matters as may be referred to it by the Government;
- and to advise the Government on International scientific Liaison.

Although my colleague, the Minister of Education became a "Doctor" in the record time of a few minutes during a Convocation ceremony, there is little hope of your distinguished gentlemen turning me into a scientist in the course of one single meal.

Although you have not turned me into a scientist, you have turned me into a "Catalyst", and I pledge myself before you tonight to make myself the main catalyst in precipitating both action and

reaction on government support for setting up as soon as possible a National Scientific Research Council.

I can foresee the advantages to our Nation both in the field of International co-ordination, National development, economy in scientific effort and obtaining maximum use of our natural resources, and all these aspects are of tremendous value for direct application of scientific knowledge to our problems and the maximum dedicated utilisation of Scientific manpower.

Looking into the future of this Council as has been so correctly pointed out in editorial comment by our leading newspapers, in the difficulty of assessing priorities on scientific work will arise.

However, I have no doubt in my mind as to what is in fact the first most immediate priority in our country which needs the application of the best scientific brains and the utilisation of the best scientific knowledge in the world, and that is the application of science to one of our greatest national problems at the present time. The problem of preventing disastrous flooding so that our people, particularly, in the East Coast States can live a peaceful and prosperous life without the perennial fear of flood disaster.

And now, ladies and gentlemen, I thank you once again for your kindness and hospitality tonight, and I am not hinting that you give me another free dinner in the near future, but I do hope that next time I have the honour to address you distinguished scientists, I hope it will be on the occasion of launching the National Scentific Research Council.