

SPEECH BY THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AT
THE GIRL GUIDES TRAINING CONFERENCE
AT KUALA LUMPUR ON 7TH DECEMBER, 1962

Duli Yang Maha Mulia Seri Paduka Baginda Raja Permaisuri Agung, The World Chief Guide Lady Baden-Powell, Your Excellencies, Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen.

During the last ten days, at this time, every morning, I have driven to Parliament at present in session.

This morning, on my way here, sitting in my car, I asked myself whether it is easier for me to make a speech in Parliament or to address this Conference.

I came to the conclusion that I really needed more courage to speak to you here than to speak in Parliament because in our Parliament we have only three lady Members and it is certainly easier to stand up to an audience in which there are only three ladies compared to an audience in which I, as a male, am in a definite minority.

Many years ago a distinguished philosopher once said that "No woman can really make a fool out of a man; all she can do is to give a man an opportunity to develop his natural capacities". Therefore, ladies, sheltering behind this philosopher, I stand here with confidence now in the belief that if I say anything foolish my charming and feminine audience must take the blame.

I am happy and honoured to be present here today to welcome, on behalf of the people of Malaya, all of you, the National Guide Leaders from all over Asia who have come here, to Kuala Lumpur, to attend the First Asian Regional Conference on Girl Guide Leadership Training.

We are greatly honoured this morning in having this occasion blessed with the gracious presence of Her Majesty, the Raja Permaisuri Agung, who in word, deed and action is, for all of us in Malaya, a striking and shining example of unselfish, tireless and inspiring service to the country and to such organizations as the Girl Guides Association, was awarded the Sri Maharaja

Mangku Negara, the highest honour which can be paid to a lady of our land.

I am told that the idea of the Girl Guide Movement was first introduced to Malaya in 1916.

I repeat this date, 1916, because I am sure that this particular date will unlock the door of memory for another great lady who, today, honours us with her presence; because it was in 1916 that Lady Baden-Powell was first appointed as Chief Commissioner of the Girl Guide Movement.

It seldom falls to the lot of any human being to be twice famous in this world but, in her case, I can quite justly say that she is twice famous.

Firstly, she became known throughout the world, as the dear and devoted wife and working partner of a very famous man—Lord Baden-Powell, who, as we all know, as the father and founder of the Scout and Guide Movement won a place in the hearts of all right-thinking men and women the world over.

Secondly, she became famous again, after the world had mourned the loss of her very great husband—she became famous in her own right, by her great contribution to peace and goodwill among nations by her tremendous energetic and dynamic contribution to the world-wide Girl Guide Movement—my dear lady, you are no stranger to Malaya but let me say with all sincerity how glad we are to welcome you here once again to our shores.

I notice that the main purpose of your Conference is to consider the fundamental principles of the World Association of Girl Guides in the light of changing conditions in the world today.

I know that you are a completely non-political movement but, forgive me for saying, that it would be an excellent thing for the world today if the principles of the Guide Movement were adopted and applied by all politicians in the world at both national and international level.

I admire very much the promises which a Guide makes—a promise of duty to God, to her country and obedience to the Guide law which requires the application of such qualities as,

honesty, loyalty, helpfulness, friendliness, courtesy, cheerfulness and purity in thought, word and deed.

There is only one of these laws which some politicians would have difficulty in applying because I have heard it said that a politician has the cleanest mind of all because he changes it so often.

With regard to the changing conditions of our times, I think it is essential for all of us to realise that times and ideas are changing and changing very fast.

For example in the days when the Girl Guide Movement was first started in the days before World War I, the world lived at a leisurely pace, travel was slow and each Nation lived many days' and many months' distance from each other.

In such days it was probably easier for Girl Guides to keep their promise and to obey the principles of the Girl Guide law but, nowadays, as life becomes faster and more hectic, these qualities of the Girl Guide Movement are more difficult to apply in the speed and bustle of day-to-day life.

But, nevertheless, this should not make you despair but rather make you more determined to apply with more force and application these great qualities which are the heritage of mankind.

With regard to the relationship between nation and nation, times have changed.

Only last week the foundations were laid for the construction of a new type of supersonic aircraft which will cut down the travelling time between Singapore and Europe to a mere ten hours, the distance between the United States and the United Kingdom to a mere three hours.

This means that we, the countries of Asia, will soon be only minutes apart.

So, therefore, day by day the concept of the World is changing and so much also changed the concept of Nationalism.

This does not mean that we must no longer be proud and loyal to our own particular Nations, neither does it mean that we must ignore the old saying: "My country, right or wrong".

It does mean that we need get together more and more, as you are doing to-day in this very Conference hall so that we can get to know each other better.

It has been said that the supreme issue before all the people of the World to-day is the elimination of War.

It is unlikely that we, the countries of Asia, can become leaders in the race to the Moon or in the race for the stockpile of deterrent nuclear weapons.

But here in Asia we have the potential of a greater and more important stockpile for peace, a stockpile of tolerance, understanding and goodwill to which the Girl Guide Movement is in itself a great contribution.

However, to bring to the surface this great potential of mutual understanding and goodwill which exist in this region, more and more leadership is required and I am glad to see that one of the main topics for discussion in your Conference is the subject of leadership.

When I read in your Agenda the word "leadership" I, like so many before me, tried to find a definition of leadership.

The first definition I came across read something like this:

"That the beginning of leadership is a battle for the hearts and minds of men."

However, standing here in front of an audience of such delightful ladies, I realise that this definition is no good for you because you have already won my heart and I, like any sensible man, would probably follow you without being led.

So, therefore, I have found for you another definition:

"The capacity and the will to rally men and women to a common purpose and the character and behaviour which will inspire confidence and trust."

We in Asia to-day need a leadership so that we can play our part in contributing as much as possible to all human enlightenment and understanding. We also need leaders in the various fields of activities in order that our respective countries can carry out

the work of development to provide our people with a better and higher standard of living and a way of life compatible with human dignity and civilisation. Unfortunately to-day we live in the world so fraught with dangers and difficulties, so disturbed and so sharply divided. Perhaps the greatest achievement of mankind in the last few decades has been the unrivalling control of the nuclear fusion. There is a tendency to channel this discovery towards destructive rather than for peaceful purposes, as a result of which there exist to-day a constant threat to world peace and security.

Therefore, the greatest contribution which a movement such as yours and the Conference that you are holding now can make is to promote an understanding and goodwill among people who live in this region of Asia and to help and train the Youth of our country so that they can provide the leadership in the various fields of activities and can guide our peoples towards the achievement of the objective I have mentioned.

Finally, ladies, I should like to wish you all success in your Conference and sincerely hope that you will all enjoy your stay here in Malaya.