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SPEECH BY THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER TO THE Y'S
MEN CLUB OF SINGAPORE AT PRINCESS RESTAU-
RANT, SINGAPORE ON 19TH JUNE, 1965

I am extremely happy to have this opportunity of meeting and addressing the members of the Y's Men Club and their guests here today. In fact, every time I came to Singapore, I had always welcomed the opportunity to meet the people of Singapore. I hope to visit Singapore regularly and I would be even happier to meet more people and, if humanly possible, every single Malaysian living on this island.

I would like to thank the president, committee members and members of Y's Men's Club for this kind invitation to lunch and to address you all. I am indeed very happy and honoured to be your guest this afternoon. As you know, Ladies and Gentlemen, our country Malaysia is a new nation barely two years old.

Therefore there is so much for all of us to do to consolidate our newly won independence to give our people a better deal, a higher standard of living and better amenities of life. If all of us could devote our energies towards this one aim, towards our immediate task of building a united and happy nation then we all stand to gain so much by it.

If instead of talking of divisions, partitions, disunity or percentages of population, or percentages of racial proportion we all talk about things we have in common, talk about our similarities, talk about ways and means of bringing our people of different races closer together, then our country and all of us would be much happier.

Our immediate task is to build and consolidate this new nation of ours to face the challenges of the present, Indonesian confrontation as well as disrupting elements within our midst. That is why it is so important that all of us should do everything possible to consolidate our country and not to allow any section of our community, much less a certain person to say or do anything that would disrupt our country and the unity of our people.

Our country has been an independent, free and sovereign nation barely two years, day by day gaining strength in spite of attempts by Soekarno and his Communist colleagues, opportunists and reckless politicians both from within and without to crush and dominate us.

I am glad that the spirit, solidarity and determination of everyone in all parts of Malaysia is extremely high; their morale is extremely high in spite of anything Soekarno does or says about confrontation.

In spite of Soekarno's infiltration and subversion along the borders of Sabah and Sarawak, in Singapore and Malaya and apparent rather than real political conflict between competing parties, Malaysia remains a united nation, determined to uphold and protect our national security and sovereignty and to forge ahead with the progressive and dynamic development towards greater prosperity and a happier life for all Malaysians — irrespective of their racial origin and creed.

The story of confrontation is so familiar to all of you already and suffice, if I may just say, that whatever differences we have with Indonesia, whether Soekarno likes our democratic system of Government and policies or not, he has no right nor any business to send his troops to commit acts of aggression against our country.

If there is to be international peace, if the rule of law and respect for each other's national integrity and sovereignty are to be the fundamental basis in which nations regulate their relations with one another, the use of force must be stopped.

I am very glad to say that the World has, to a great extent, realised the real situation in South-East Asia today and we are glad that among the Afro-Asian nations, there is an every-growing realisation of the danger to peace in South-East Asia as a result of Soekarno's aggression.

Our chances to be present or seated at the Afro-Asian Conferences in Algiers later this month and thus claim our rightful place as a sovereign Afro-Asian Nation at this gathering is indeed good judging from the latest counts and reports we have received.

Most countries realised that we must be there because it is our right as an independent Afro-Asian Nation, to participate in any Afro-Asian gathering.

It would be a great disappointment if we fail to be admitted to the Algiers Conference but we can trust the sense of justice and fairplay of our friends in Africa, the Middle East and in Asia that they would uphold the principle on which they all believe that in a conference such as this Afro-Asian Conference which is districtly geographical in nature, every independent country in the region has a right to attend.

Like all newly independent countries of Africa and Asia we believe in international peace and understanding. We believe in cooperation among nations so that by our united efforts we could give our people a new deal. We could help to give them a better and higher standard of living which they all desire so much having been under colonial rule for so long.

We share the same ideals, hopes and aspirations as all newly developing countries of Asia and Africa. That is why we have always said we want to live in peace with all nations including Indonesia but international peace must be based on respect of each other's independence and integrity. In this confrontation by Indonesia against us, African and Asian countries have now realised who are in the wrong.

When I visited Africa recently all the leaders I met expressed the wish that our trouble with Indonesia should be settled peacefully. I told them we are always ready to talk about peace. Even at the Conference in Algiers if we are admitted we will be pleased to seek any attempt to solved our differences with Indonesia. But I make it clear to our friends in Africa and in Asia that cannot be peace unless aggression is stopped.

We have been facing Indonesian confrontation politically, diplomatically, economically and militarily for nearly two years and we are getting the better of Indonesia in all these fields.

Politically, we won a great victory at the United Nations when nine out of the eleven nations in the Security Council voted in our favour against Indonesian aggression, and it would be another victory for us if Afro-Asian countries accept us as an independent sovereign nation.

Economically Indonesia suffer much more than we do by this confrontation.

Militarily every attempt by Indonesia to set foot in our territory either by land, sea or air has been foiled by our military forces with the assistance of our friends from the Commonwealth.

However, lately as a result of utterances by some politicians in bringing up and magnifying sensitive issues and showing that there is a possible disunity among our people. Any sign that there is a loophole of slowing down in our determination and our will to face this confrontation as a united people, Indonesia would be encouraged to dominate or crush us.

Indeed if we continue to show disunity then President Soekarno need do very little to crush us; we would crush ourselves by our own hands. Therefore, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is of the utmost importance that the various races in Malaysia should remain united. Our greatest asset is racial harmony; our salvation is national unity.

In a multi-racial society where racial differences coincide with economic differences, where each community has been nurtured to live their own separate cultural and traditional compartments, and in a society like this, it is highly dangerous to experiment with any frivolous theories or pet dogmas of a minority group of people.

While we continue to build Malaysia, our urgent job is to sustain national solidarity and the maintenance of law and order in this country. What is imperative is the imbibing of a sense of belonging to one national and a common identity and loyalty. Ironically, confrontation has provided an impetus to this process of nation-building of our various communities.

But recent utterances and doings of some people have seriously undermined our national unity and our progress towards nationhood.

We must realise, as they all know, that it is very important that the spirit of compromise and understanding between the various races always exist in Malaysia because until a truly "homogenous society" emerges, we will have to make adjustments here and there as we go along the road to nationhood.

It is imperative that along this journey to one nationhood all should appreciate the sensitivity of various communities. In this great task that we face in building a united nation from among our people of various races, we must all the time be able to carry our people with us. Our people have lived for generations in different communities and it is difficult for them to forget overnight that they belong to different communities.

Therefore as a first essential step it is necessary to sustain and strengthen the harmony and goodwill, the friendship that exist among our people and as we go along making adjustments here and there we should make our people of various races feel they have a rightful place in our country.

One this is done, it may take years, it may take generations to do it, then we will have a united people and our people would be able to guard themselves as members of one nation rather than as members of different communities.

Our approach must be cautious and realistic because we must be sure that we succeed, because if we do not there will be no hope for all of us, no hope for our country and our people.

When our Prime Minister the Tunku announced on the 27th of May 1961 his concept of Malaysia at the Foreign Correspondents Association of Singapore he said among other things that territories in Malaya, Singapore, Sabah, Sarawak and Brunei should be brought together in political and economic cooperation. And this will come about if our people of all races think of themselves as Malaysians and have Malaysia as the sole objective of their loyalty.

The attitude of the Alliance Government in this has not changed and this is our concept of Malaysia — i.e. to unite these various territories so that our people in these territories, Malays, Chinese, Indians, Eurasians, Ibans, Kadazans and others could be brought together into one sovereign and independent country to which they owe their undivided loyalty.

We have to build a new nation out of our people of various communities. There is no question that our new country should belong to any particular community or group. We decided to establish this new nation for all of us, for all its citizens of all races. However in this process of integrating these territories and of assimilating our people of different races, there must be adjustment, compromise and a spirit to give and take.

It takes time for the new territories of Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak to be integrated from a colonial rule to a new set up under independence.

It would take time for the people particularly the people of Sarawak and Sabah who are separated from us many hundred of miles to realise and appreciate that they belong to one nation with us and to regard us as one people with them.

Malaya became independent in 1957. Malaya consists of different States. In 1948 before we had the Federation of Malaya some of these States were independent sovereign States and it took some time for the people from Kedah to accept the Government in Kuala Lumpur as their national Government.

It took some time for people in Kelantan and Trengganu to regard the people of Johore as their own brothers and sisters, members of one nation. It took some years for the administrative set up to be adjusted,

for the machinery of Government to be put into a proper working order.

But with patience, tolerance and the spirit of compromise and goodwill we succeeded in establishing a strong Central Government and we succeeded to some extent in moulding the various communities together.

We succeeded in taking away State loyalties and subordinate to the loyalties of the Central Government.

In the same way, Singapore although closely linked with the rest of Malaya economically, geographically and historically have been separated constitutionally for 17 to 18 years will take some time to adjust itself to the new set up.

But we must give time for all this. We must not be impatient and force the pace because if we do we shall disrupt the very thing we intend to establish.

Constitutionally and administratively we are a federation of States. We must therefore give time for the various State Government machinery to adjust themselves and for the Central Government and the various State Governments to work together in harmony and in cooperation.

In order that our people of various races who under the British were allowed and encouraged to live as separate and different communities, to adjust themselves and to make them feel that they are members of one nation.

In a multi racial society like ours we must continue to make adjustments as we move along the road to one nationhood.

We must do everything possible to encourage our people through our education policy, through the use of our national language and towards one culture to feel that they are one.

We in the Alliance Government and in the Central Government do not pretend to be clever but we know we are sincere and we are practical. We know that our objective is, we know what our concept of Malaysia is because we were the people who conceived and brought this to life.

A new country like Malaysia can be compared to a modern new building. When a new building is constructed with unfamiliar architectural design, a lot of people cry out in protest. But these same people in a few years time will have got over the shock of unfamiliarity.

Indonesia protested against the formation of Malaysia and perhaps in a few years time she will have to accept it and I hope it will be the same with some of our people.

After all our new nation has just been born. Let us give it time to grow to manhood. Let us all in unity develop and foster its growth.

The Western concepts of equality, liberty and democracy must necessarily be viewed in the context of our social organization.

Man is born free; yet is not free.

He is born equal to others and yet not equal to others.

But society changes and with it man comes nearer to the fulfilment of his ideals.

Change implies understanding just as man must evolve a reasonable and workable scheme to make life tolerable; so must Malaysians evolve a workable and tolerable way of life.

No form of society is eternally changeless; it changes with experience and time.

Accepted political concepts change; even the most rigid — Stalinism is an example where the rigidity of Stalinism perceptibly changes with the increase of material wealth of the people.

Capitalism too is more the unbridled force it once was: enlightened capitalism of the early 18th Century — the workhouse — has given way to cost-of-living allowances, maternity benefits, age old pensions and others benefits of the modern industrial and technological groups.

Planning is a basic feature of modern society; otherwise anarchic production; hence planning and organisation to ensure the most efficient utilisation of wealth of society for the benefit of the greatest number of its members.

Thus we find capitalism incorporating the best that could be found in socialist planning, in organisation and production.

That is the way even in capitalist countries of the West England, France and closer to us, New Zealand - the essential of the welfare state inherited from past socialist governments, still operate; that socialism is not dismantled merely because a more conservative government is in power.

The Alliance Government is no exception to the rule of the trend prevailing in modern society. We do not only accept the pro of democracy - Parliament and judiciary system - but Western techniques of organisation of productive forces in society. We realise that purely capitalist techniques of planning and organisations do not suit conditions in our country. So we find new techniques suitable to our own conditions and our own way of life.

The Rural Development Program for example incorporated the best features of socialism and adapted to our way of life - the gotong royong spirit of traditional Malaysian society. Ladies and gentlemen, equal rights for all citizens - equal rights before the law - that exists in Malaysia; equal rights to vote and to be vote into or our of power; that too exists in Malaysia. Malay special right is distinctly different - it is a means, a legal means, a constitutional means, to rectify economic imbalances in society. But why some people talk of a more about Malay right or native right and less of economic inequalities. As far as the Alliance Governments is concerned we have served our people and our country. We have shown by our example and by our deeds in the past that we have been a fair and just Government. We shall continue to carry out our duties and responsibilities, that is to build a happy and a united country.

Ladies and gentlemen, I can go on talking for many, many hours on so many of our national problems but I do not wish to detain you too long on this my first occasion of meeting you. It is our duty not only of the Government but of our people to rectify all these inequalities and imbalances. We must endeavour to help the less fortunate of our people by evolutionary and gradual methods but without taking the right of others.

We will do this within our constitutional set up under our system of Parliamentary democracy. Our policy is to endeavour to level up and not level down. We want to give our people of all races the rightful place in our society in our country. That is why Ladies and Gentlemen, it is important for us to look at all our problems through the right perspective. We would be doing a great disservice to our country whoever it may be if we endeavour to draw a wedge between the different communities or to rise to power through communal issues.

It has been my great pleasure to meet you all today and it is during moments such as this that I feel proud and happy to know of the abundance of goodwill and the wealth of talents in our country and whatever your professions and inclinations are, you all represent the hopes of our Nation and I am sure that in whatever sphere you are in you will be playing a great part in the shaping of our nation. Ladies and Gentlemen, Malaysia is our country and we must all defend it.

Malaysia is young and as most of its population are also young. I have no doubt that it will be continually infused with an idealism - Malaysian idealism - that will always renew its life and its being.