

SPEECH BY THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AT THE
OPENING OF THE FACULTY OF MEDICINE, UNIVER-
SITY OF MALAYA, KUALA LUMPUR, ON 2ND AUGUST,
1965

Mr. Pro Chancellor¹, Mr Acting Vice Chancellor², Dean Danaraj³,
Your Excellencies, Hon'ble Ministers, Distinguished Guests from
Overseas and Malaysia, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Both as a Malaysian and Deputy Prime Minister I am very proud indeed to be at the University of Malaya this morning to take part in two special ceremonies. I say this with the greatest pleasure because it gives me a personal opportunity to pay tribute to the remarkable developments that are taking place here in Pantai Valley.

During the last 7 or 8 years there has been, as the Minister of Education⁴ said, a phenomenal growth in our University here. In 1956 the whole of this Pantai Valley was nothing but tree-clad hills, largely rubber trees. Today it is clustered around with a whole complex of buildings, of faculties, of administrative blocks and students' hostels. The growth of this University is one of the many examples of the tremendous progress that this country has made since independence. I would like to associate myself with my colleague, the Minister of Education, in paying a very warm tribute to Dato Sir Alexander Oppenheim who, as the Minister of Education said, was the midwife, watching this baby while it was conceived and then was responsible for the delivery, later for nursing into its present lusty boyhood. We are all sorry that Dato Oppenheim will be leaving us very soon but I am sure he will have the satisfaction to know, wherever he may be, that this University is a monument to his energy, ability and farsightedness.

In this place where we are, two years ago, there was nothing but jungles and hills. Today a whole complex of buildings newly risen from the ground, are in active occupation and use by the Faculty of Medicine; a Teaching Hospital is in construction soaring to the sky; and bulldozers are busy, day and night clearing sites for new developments already planned and worked out for this great Medical Centre. This is a typical example of the progress that has taken place in this University for the last 7 or 8 years.

¹ Justice Mohamad Suffian.

² Prof. R.L. Huang.

³ Dean of the Faculty of Medicine.

⁴ E n. Mohd Khir Johari.

The fact that these acts of inauguration are belated for me, however, a fine tribute and a splendid compliment to the tremendous achievements of all concerned.

I am sure that everyone who has had a part to play in what has been done here, in what is being done, and in what will be done, will agree with me that the construction of this medical centre is a splendid example of the close cooperation and consultation among officers of various ministries and departments concerned and the University of Malaya. In this respect I would like to pay my tribute to Professor T.J. Danaraj, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine. From the very moment of his appointment two and half years ago after having made a special study of medical schools and teaching hospitals in the United States, Prof. Danaraj immediately started work on the establishment of this medical centre with enthusiasm and boundless energy. His will and his drive and leadership have translated the aims and the hopes of the Government and the University of Malaya into real concrete result.

I doubt if ever before anywhere in the world a Medical Centre such as this, combining all aspects of teaching, research and patient care, has been erected to such an unusual building timetable. This is a schedule to prepare for all consecutive phases of development of a brand new medical course in such a way that each aspect of construction is completed in time to meet the needs of the next stage of tuition. The daring and foresight displayed and the effective execution of all the problems involved have brought into being, and are still doing so, a medical institution that is completely modern and in many ways unique, not only in Asia but in the world.

A creative spirit has been in evidence throughout the whole concept. These buildings are not just concrete and steel, but pregnant with meaning, because they are the physical aspects of an all-round philosophy of medicine. This Medical Centre is aimed to teach and train not only students of medicine, but of dentistry and nursing, and also laboratory staffs. In addition, it will provide for post-graduate medical education and for medical research, especially in Malaysian problems.

Tremendous changes and developments have taken place in medicine in recent years, and in this Medical Centre Malaysia has drawn on the best of modern experience everywhere, adapting ideas to local needs. Whereas in the past, for instance, it was the practice in medical school for the students to come to the staff, here the staff will come to the students working in an intimate tutorial system.

The philosophy of medical education which this Centre will interpret embraces in its thinking not student training only, or the young

doctor only, but the whole profession, their need for dedication, and their need for renewal from time to time, and above all their place in a developing country. In short, this philosophy envisages the medical man not as a doctor only but as a social scientist with a definite and special responsibility and feeling for the community. Therefore, in the first four years of the medical course special attention will be paid to social and preventive medicine.

This is of particular importance to Malaysia with its large rural population. It is the intention that the medical student will gain his practical experience not only in this Teaching Hospital but in other hospitals and rural health centres as well. In this way the Medical Centre of the University of Malaya will be in close and continual contact with the people of Malaysia.

In this Medical Centre a major task of the Faculty will be in the field of post-graduate and continuing medical education. General practitioners and specialists will be able to participate. There will be short-time refresher courses, major full-time courses in basic medical sciences, and advanced courses in certain fields, all with the object of further developing specialisation, which is urgently needed in Malaysia.

As an earnest of this appreciation of medical education, this new Faculty of Medicine has organised an international conference to begin this very day on the theme of "The Education of the Medical Student for the Social and Preventive Aspects of Medical Practice". Distinguished professors and experts in medicine from nine countries and from Malaysia are already here in Kuala Lumpur and present in this gathering. On behalf of the Government of Malaysia I welcome them most warmly, for in these new and inspiring surroundings they will realise that this nation of Malaysia is paying paramount regard to the fundamental of all aspects of medicine and health.

In doing so this Faculty will answer the problem of our future needs for doctors. But to meet the difficulty arising from the shortage of doctors at present — a state of affairs which is a worry of other countries — we have to consider what is to be done between now and until the time when this Faculty is producing doctors in a steady and increasing stream. The question of recognition of degrees in medical science from other universities other than those which we have depended upon in the past consequently arises. It is not so much the question of recognition but of adjustment. Just as we have drawn on the best of experience in creating this Faculty, we intend to follow the best standards of practice applicable elsewhere in recruiting and appointing doctors. In this regard the Government will make a decision

in the next few months but the policy of the Government in this respect is clear that is, Government will treat all universities, other than our own university, on the same basis and purely on merits. Whatever difficulties that may arise in coming to this decision will be resolved and if it is necessary to amend our laws and regulations they will be amended.

It is now my very pleasant duty formally to declare open this Faculty of Medicine in the University of Malaya. This ceremony and this Medical Centre open up new vistas of hope and achievement for the health, betterment and happiness of the people of Malaysia.