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SPEECH BY THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AT THE
OPENING OF THE FIRST CONFERENCE OF INFOR-
MATION AND BROADCASTING OFFICIALS IN KUALA
LUMPUR ON 8TH FEBRUARY, 1965

The Honourable Minister of Information and Broadcasting¹ and
Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to speak to you all today and to declare open the First Conference of the Malaysian Information and Broadcasting Officials Conference. I would like to extend to you all the Season's Greetings — Selamat Hari Raya to the Muslims and Kong Hee Fatt Choy to our Chinese friends.

All of us are aware of the important role the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting plays during the national crisis that is facing our young nation. The Conference today, I hope, will be able to improve existing information and public relations services of the Government. The people expect modern innovations in mass communications and effective technique. Public information has always been an important aspect of politics, and Government. Government if it wants to survive and succeed in its policies must make sure that their policies and attitudes are fully understood by the people in the country and comprehensible to the outside world.

During this Emergency and when we are fighting against Indonesian aggression and machinations all over the places the need for correct and speedy information becomes all the more important. We have learnt from history that the cause of many misunderstanding, trouble and even war has been the lack of information, distorted or polluted version or the complete absence of a correct interpretation of each other's motives. We must do our best to keep our people and the world well informed about our side of the story in our struggle against Indonesian aggression. It is not enough to only inform influential opinion but we must also win their sympathy to our side. Our battle against Indonesian aggression is not just fighting the guerillas but to win over to our side those uncommitted nations. They must be told effectively that we are the aggrieved party in this confrontation and that we have done our best to remain friendly with Jakarta. But all our efforts had been in vain. The key to peace is in the hands of the Indonesians. If they sincerely want peace there will be peace the moment Soekarno orders withdrawal of Indonesian troops on our soil and promises that he will leave us alone and in peace.

¹ Encik Senu bin Abdul Rahman.

Information plays a vital role in securing the peace of the world and furthering its progress and prosperity. This is because man has conquered space and time but he is yet to learn how to live in peace with his own neighbours. The cells of the human mind still contain vague fears, unexpressed jealousies, hatred and suspicious — real or imaginary. At least, this is very true with the cells in the mind of some of the Indonesian leaders who are obsessed in wanting to crush us at any cost and for no apparent reason at all for wanting to see us perish.

Mass communications are important and that is why every Government and organisation right from the U.N. has given top priority to the development of mass communications. Our Government realises this and I hope the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting is fully geared to meet the challenges that are confronting us. The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting can achieve even more with greater efficiency and dedication. I know the energy, enthusiasm and drive of everyone in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. I have seen some of them in action on various occasions and I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate my sincere thanks to them for what has been achieved by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

I hope all of us realise that you have a great task — especially your Information Officers and Broadcasters — in front of you all. The task is to promote national unity, solidarity, patriotism and to ensure that every loyal citizen of Malaysia is solidly standing behind the Alliance Government in its crisis against Indonesia. Malaysia is a parliamentary democracy. Notwithstanding, the Emergency caused by Indonesia's aggression, the Government is pushing ahead with its plans to develop the country and its resource to the fullest extent possible so that all its citizens irrespective of their racial origin can enjoy greater and fuller life and happiness. In this task the Government relies and the people expect full cooperation, dedication and loyalty of everyone in the Government services and especially those in the Information and Broadcasting field. The Ministry must not only sell Government policies and ideas but it must convince the people that the policies and ideas are good and durable.

About two months ago the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting played a big role in the nation-wide celebrations of the National Solidarity Week. To my mind, there is a continuing need to keep up the spirit of National Solidarity alive in the hearts and minds of the people everywhere at every level. You are equally aware of the insidious threat to our unity and the sources from which such threat emerges. Your task is to assist the Government in its battle not only against

Indonesian confrontation, but also against communism, communalism, chauvinism and opportunism in public services. In combating these evils, the Ministry must not only be very competent but it must also provide inspired leadership. Some politicians are bent on exploiting communalism for their own ends. I tell them it is not enough to shout and call for national unity when seconds after doing so they create problems. I advise these politicians to stop or at least refrain from this right away before great damage is done to themselves, their parties and the nation.

The future of our country depends largely on our ability to comprehend the nature of the forces which tend to weaken our unity and solidarity. In this, you are the seismographs of the state, in having to play a dual role in keeping the government and the people informed at the same time. The Alliance Government is freely elected by the people but despite this there is the need — that every present need — for us in the Government to be kept continually, informed about public opinion in this country. In a country like Malaysia where the majority of the people are youth, there is an equal need to interpret to them correctly and effectively the implications of Government's policies and actions. This is one of the major tasks of your Ministry.

I am confident that the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting would rise to the occasion in our task of creating and maintaining the harmonious relationship between the Government and the people and in safeguarding our national integrity and independence. I hope that the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting would play an every-increasing role in strengthening our national solidarity, and assist in the evolution of a United Malaysian Nation based on equality and justice.

I wish you all a happy and fruitful conference. Thank you very much.