

**SPEECH BY DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
TO MALAYSIAN STUDENTS IN AUSTRALIA
ON 6.11.67**

Before I left home to come to Australia, our Minister of Education, Encik Khir Johari, reminded me of an important engagement with one of the most important groups of people I would meet in this country. He meant you. Encik Khir Johari is a very good friend of mine and I have always been a great admirer of his tremendous energy and drive. You know, he has half a dozen children, and so he cannot really blame anyone else for the massive problem he faces in providing education for nearly two million children in Malaysia. Two million out of a total population of ten million. Not many people realise that one out of every five persons in Malaysia is in school today, and we spend over 350 million dollars or about 20 per cent of the national budget on their education. We do this because we realise, as Japan did a long time ago, that the greatest natural wealth of any country is its people. A well-educated people, imbued with dedication and a sense of national discipline, can make the poorest country a great nation. Trained and disciplined brain power is capable of any achievement, and that is why I regard this function today as one of my most important in Australia. You represent here a big pool of that kind of brainpower which would be of tremendous value to your country.

There are about six thousand of you here in Australia, more than five thousand in Britain and several thousand more in the United States, New Zealand, Canada, India and Europe. You may be here on a Malaysian Government scholarship, or on a grant from the Australian Government under the Colombo Plan, or on your own, but there is one point I would like to emphasise to all of you, and to all Malaysian students overseas. You are here largely because Malaysia has always encouraged her bright sons and daughters to go abroad in search of knowledge, and has helped them to do so in many ways. You can travel out of Malaysia without any trouble at all, take as much money as you can afford, and when you come to a country like Australia you can be sure of a friendly reception because your agreement has prepared the groundwork for it. Whenever we are offered aid by a friendly country we place a very high priority on education because we believe that education is one of those rare good things of which you can never have too much.

We encourage our best sons and daughters to go abroad not merely to acquire a higher level of education but also to imbibe some of the spirit of the countries to which they go. Here in Australia, you find a terrific drive and energy and initiative, and a formidable spirit which has conquered the vast spaces of this continent, and created massive industries which have given the Australian people a high standard of living. Education alone is useless if a man is listless and timid and lacks the pioneering spirit which, more than anything else, helps to create new frontiers in all fields of human life. This, too, you can learn from Australia, for

these men are pioneers. Bring back as much of this spirit as possible for we have great need of it in Malaysia today.

Don't get me wrong, Don't imagine that we lack this spirit completely. If you go back home today you will find it stirring in many places, and great things have begun to happen out there.

We are carving new settlements out of the jungle and giving our landless farmers ten acres each of good rubber, oil palm and other crops from which they can earn 400 dollars a month within five or six years. Four hundred dollars as against 40 or 50 dollars they earned before. Soon we shall be opening up the biggest land development scheme in our part of the world – 150 thousand acres of rich jungle land in Pahang known as the Jengka Triangle, which will flourish before long with rubber, oil palm, fruit orchards and timber industries. The project is so promising that it is difficult to see where the prospects end.

We are opening new roads at the rate of two miles a day, shooting out in all directions. With the help of Australia we have just built one all the way from Kuching to Sibiu in Sarawak. Before long we shall have the first East-West road in Malaysia linking Penang directly with the East Coast. This road will open up thousands of acres of hinterland to farming, trade, industrialisation and general development, worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

I don't want to bore you with too many facts and figures, but perhaps you ought to know that we have doubled our output of electricity since independence, and research has produced a new rubber tree which gives us three thousand pounds an acre. Before the war we were doing well with three hundred pounds an acre. Research has also given us new strains of padi which will make us self-sufficient in rice within the next two or three years, and you can be sure that other wonderful things will soon be pulled out of the research bag.

I can see no end to the rich prospects ahead. Do you know, for instance, that in Sabah we have thousands of acres of untouched land where the timber is hundreds of feet tall and so massive that two men can hardly get their arms round a tree. This we do know, but we don't know what other riches lie locked away in that state waiting to be discovered and developed by young men and women like you.

Do you know that they catch delicious lobsters off Sarawak and some of it – not much – is exported to Europe and the United States. The seas around Malaysia are teeming with fish waiting to be developed into a multi-million dollar export industry. But to achieve this, we need scientific and organisational ability of a high calibre such as you may have one day.

There are boundless opportunities waiting for people like you to come home and turn them into reality. Our education programme is turning out thousands of boys and girls with sufficient education to become skilled workers, technicians and junior executives. But we need more scientists, engineers and top-level managers who can organise them and get the best out of them.

you may not find those opportunities if you decide to confine yourself in an air-conditioned office in some town or other, with a pretty secretary at your beck and call. You will find them only if you go and look for them in pioneering country, in the rural areas of Malaysia, in the timber forests of Sabah and up the

great rivers of Sarawak. And you find them in ways that will be doubly rewarding if you set out in a spirit of dedication to your country and service to your people. You must be prepared to learn from the examples of the young men and women in the Peace Corps and others like them.

Don't be worried about gloomy tales you may hear about Malaysia. A few unfriendly critics may say we are in tight economic position. You know, about once every six months or so, some Wall Street expert puts out a report that America is heading for economic trouble, and the share index dives ten per cent. I have no doubt you see the same sort of story here from time to time, suggesting that the Australian economy is about to collapse. The fact is that a good runner usually crouches before he sets off on a sprint, and some of those so-called experts don't seem to be able to recognise that posture. They often jump to the conclusion that the runner has either lost his balance or is tired.

Other more malicious types may tell you that Malaysia is heading for racial trouble. I have never been much of a believer in fortune-telling, and I am sure you don't go in for that sort of thing either, with your advanced education. Let's go by the facts. The situation we have in Malaysia today is the situation we have always had. Search your minds and your books and see if we have ever had any serious trouble of this sort in the past. If we have not had it before, why should we have it now or in the future. Go to the market place in Kuching, or the schools in Jesselton, or the beach in Port Dickson, or the eating stalls at Campbell Road in Kuala Lumpur – and you will find Malay, Chinese, Indians and others eating, studying and playing together without a care in the world, without any anxiety about racial troubles. They have too much in common, and everyone know the danger of starting this kind of nonsense.

And let me tell you the secret of our success so far. We had a little trouble some years ago in a small fishing island. It started in the afternoon, but before nightfall we had more policemen in that island than there were people. We kept all the villagers indoors until they saw sense and patched up their quarrel. One or two chaps might have suffered a black-eye or some bruises, but no one was killed. That is our method. We nip this sort of trouble in the bud. So don't worry.

Some of these stargazers said we were going to have trouble over the National Language. We passed the bill earlier last month and a few hot-heads made some noise. But that was all. There's been no trouble. In September Malay will become the official language, while the other languages of Malaysia will be taught and used much the same way as before. We are not mad, so we have not done away with English. It will continue to be used, even for official purposes wherever it is necessary. So don't let this worry you.

My message to you, therefore, is a simple one. Finish your studies as soon as possible and come home. We need you and others like you to make our dream come true.