

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER AT A DINNER GIVEN BY SELANGOR CHINESE COMMUNITY AT THE CHINESE ASSEMBLY HALL, IN KUALA LUMPUR ON 12TH FEBRUARY, 1971

Y.B. Datuk Y. T. Lee, Tan Sri-Tan Sri, Datuk-Datuk, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I would like to thank you, members of the Chinese Assembly Hall, the Guilds and Associations, and last but not least, the Chinese Community in Selangor, for the honour you have given me and my wife this evening.

I am also deeply touched Mr Chairman by the kind words of compliment you said about myself and I would like to assure you all that so long as I have your support and confidence—in myself and my government—I shall have all the encouragement and inspiration to continue serving our country and our nation with vigour and with dedication.

Ladies and Gentlemen: Only a month ago, most parts of our country, including our Capital City here, were subjected to the most severe flood since the last forty years. I am happy to say that the situation has returned to normal again, as evidenced by our gathering here. I would, therefore, like to make special mention of the magnificent response from the Guilds and Associations to our appeal for assistance. In fact, this is the second time in successive years that the Guilds and Associations in Selangor rallied for national cause, demonstrating your sense of responsibility and public spiritedness.

Ladies and Gentlemen: Your President, in his address just now, struck the right chord in emphasising the role of your various organisations in the promotion of goodwill and harmony among our people. This reassuring pledge taken together with the resolutions passed at last weekend's meeting of Chinese Community, Guilds and Associations, to my mind, augur well for the future of our country.

I would like to take this opportunity to deliberate a little on the New Economic Policy which your President also mentioned just now. As I have said on some earlier occasions, the New

Policy has two specific objectives—the eradication of poverty among our people irrespective of their racial origin and, secondly, to rectify the social and economic imbalance among the various races to ensure and attain real national unity.

My Government will implement this policy with determination for it represents a dynamic and perhaps novel strategy in order to deal more effectively and meaningfully with the social and economic problems facing us today. These problems, if not resolved, will affect not only the security of our country but indeed our very survival as a Nation.

As you would have realised, the first objective of the policy marks another phase in our economic development. The previous phase lay emphasis on rural development programmes in order to improve the amenities of life in the rural areas. The present one, on the other hand, strongly underlines our belief that the programme to eradicate poverty must transcend racial lines and, above all, must benefit the less-fortunate among our people, regardless whether they live in towns and town-fringes or in the kampungs.

However, I wish to place greater stress on the second objective of the policy and explain it in the right perspective. This is important because even now there appears to be some misapprehension in certain quarters about the government's objective and its implementation.

It may interest you all to know that even prestigious papers like the *New York Times* have gone very far wrong in their reporting and assessment of the new policy, perhaps, for obvious reasons.

I would like to state categorically that the Government will always seek to be fair and just to all in the implementation of the new policy. It is our responsibility to bring about greater development in all spheres of social and economic life, and to ensure that the fruits of all this development are shared and distributed in an equitable manner.

The long years of colonial rule have left us with several heritage—good and bad. One of these is the identification of vocation with race in which we have, generally speaking, Malays and other Natives as rice-farmers, Chinese as traders and Indians as plantation labourers. In our present context, where prosperity

and success is synonymous with industry and commerce, this present identification is no longer tenable and, in fact, highly undesirable and dangerous for the future of our nation.

Hence, we consider it an utmost urgency to devise a strategy whereby ultimately a greater proportion of Malays and other Natives will enter the commercial and industrial mainstream.

In achieving this objective, it is important that there should be more rapid development in all sectors, particularly industry. We will encourage the establishment of industries in the smaller towns and I have already stated in this respect the Government, through the State Development Corporations and PERNAS, will undertake to establish these new industries provided they are viable.

Of course, we welcome the participation of the private sector. As a result, we will have a widespread distribution of industries providing employment opportunities not only to the Malays but also to non-Malays who live in the smaller towns and rural areas. In other words, by enlarging the cake, in this case, the industrial cake—the Malays as a group will get a bigger slice as compared to the proportion they enjoyed when industries are concentrated in the larger towns.

I hope I have adequately explained the situation before you and I would like to seek your understanding and co-operation. Undoubtedly, the years before us are full of new challenges—both at home and abroad. But, as has been said before, these challenges provide us the opportunity to demonstrate our ability and our readiness to cope with whatever problems that lie in our path and our determination to build a happy and united Nation. Without these challenges, we might allow ourselves to sink into complacency and fall into the danger of being overtaken by events.

Man matures with learning and experience: so does a nation. Over the past fourteen years since we achieved independence, we have had our share of experience—both pleasant and unpleasant. We have made tremendous progress in many fields, at home and abroad. But we must go on striving for greater and bigger things so that we may leave for our future generations a firm foundation of a progressive and dynamic nation, truly multi-racial in character, united and living in happy harmony.

This is not a mere dream. I believe that if everyone of us here tonight cherishes the same vision and is willing and prepared to dedicate our whole effort towards the achievement of this aim, this will yet become a reality within our own life time.

Once again I thank you very much for your pledge and loyalty and support for the new Government and for this pleasant dinner and for an enjoyable evening. Good luck to your Association and good luck to you all.