

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER AT THE
MEETING OF FOREIGN MINISTERS OF ASEAN
COUNTRIES AT DEWAN TUNKU ABDUL RAH-
MAN, KUALA LUMPUR ON 27TH NOVEMBER,
1971

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to say how happy and honoured we in Malaysia are to welcome my colleagues, Mr Adam Malek, the Foreign Minister of Indonesia, General Romulo, the Foreign Secretary of the Philippines, and Mr Thanat Khoman, the Special Envoy of the Government of Thailand, who have come here to our capital city to attend this Conference. I would particularly like to express my personal thanks to Mr Adam Malek who has taken time off from the heavy responsibilities of his office as President of the General Assembly to come all the way from New York, half-way around the world, to be with us. That he has done so—and my other colleagues as well, who are all very busy people—is sufficient testimony to the importance that we all attach to this meeting.

As has been the practice in meetings among ASEAN Foreign Ministers, we have conducted our deliberations in a frank, cordial and informal manner. As a result we have been able to understand each other's positions better and we have been able to take significant decisions on which we shall build further towards the complete realization of our hopes and aspirations.

I refer particularly to the achievement of a very important first step—the Declaration of our determination to secure recognition and respect for Southeast Asia as a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality. The acceptance of this Declaration by the Foreign Ministers of the countries who are here today, representing as we do nearly 200 million people, signifies an important and vital step in our efforts to ensure a new era of peace and stability in Southeast Asia. Above all, this Declaration shows our determination to shape our destiny ourselves, to safeguard our independence and national integrity.



Tun Abdul Razak, kanan sekali, sedang berbincang dengan wakil-wakil dari Negara-Negara ASEAN selepas menandatangani satu Pengisytiharan di upacara penutup mesyuarat Menteri-menteri Luar Negara-Negara ASEAN di Dewan Tunku Abdul Rahman, Kuala Lumpur, pada 27hb November, 1971.

(Gambar Jabatan Penerangan Malaysia)

Whether we will succeed in the further steps ahead depends on our ability to work together. We cannot expect others to respect us as independent and sovereign countries unless we are ourselves prepared to work to maintain our independence and our sovereignty and unless we show our determination to look after ourselves so as to be free from any form of external interference. Only after we have shown this can we expect others to respect our call to make Southeast Asia a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality.

It is my hope that other countries in Southeast Asia will share our aspirations and objectives as enunciated in this Declaration and that in due course they will join us to work together for the realization of those aspirations and objectives. With the active support and collaboration of these other countries for our Declaration, we hope that other powers outside this region and in particular China, the Soviet Union and the United States, will recognise and respect this region of Southeast Asia as a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality, free from any form of external interference. At the same time, it should be emphasised that these objectives can only be attained if all countries show that they will scrupulously respect our independence and integrity and that they will not interfere in any manner in our internal affairs, either overtly or covertly. This is the only basis on which we can proceed. We cannot be neutral—no one has a right to expect us to be neutral—if there is any form of interference in our internal affairs.

Having said all this, it should be clear that we have no illusion about the long and difficult road ahead of us. I have always felt in all endeavours that we should have our foot always firmly planted on the ground—but guided at the same time by a clear vision of the future. The task on which we are now embarking is important—indeed it vitally affects our very existence as independent states and peoples. We are all fully aware that any mistake entails grave risks.

However, we shall proceed, guided by a sense of history and by a clear and definite objective—but at the same time in full recognition of the facts of international life as they exist here and how. In other words, we shall proceed with caution as well as with imagination. We are like a team of mountain-climbers

with a clear and definite objective of reaching the top, but testing each foothold carefully to make quite sure that it will hold before we can proceed to the next ledge. Like mountain-climbers, too, we are tied to each other and the safety of all of us depends on the safety of each one of us. As far as Malaysia is concerned, we shall always be in step with all our friends in Southeast Asia as we proceed on the path which this Declaration sets out.

I do not wish to speak at any length this morning. We have taken an important and historic step in adopting the Declaration and the significance of what we have done is in itself eloquent enough without the need for any further elaboration from me. For my part, I look to the future with caution and, at the same time, with confidence. I am convinced that if we can really show our determination to survive as independent and sovereign states, able to defend ourselves and ready to shape our destiny with our own united strength and will, then we can look forward to the realization of the objective which we have clearly and collectively proclaimed today—a peaceful, free and neutral Southeast Asia.



Tun Abdul Razak, tengah, sedang memperkatakan sesuatu berkenaan model Kapal Haji yang diterima dari Encik Senu di Seri Taman, Kuala Lumpur, pada 3hb November, 1971.

(Gambar Jabatan Penerangan Malaysia)