

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER AT THE
OFFICIAL DINNER GIVEN IN HONOUR OF THE
PRIME MINISTER OF LAOS, HIS HIGHNESS
PRINCE SOUVANNA PHOUME AT KUALA
LUMPUR ON 15TH DECEMBER, 1971

Mr Prime Minister, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you, Mr Prime Minister, on your first visit to our country. We are indeed honoured to receive you and members of your delegation to our Capital City, Kuala Lumpur. Speaking for myself, I have been looking forward to your visit since our first meeting in Tokyo in 1965; later at the Lusaka Conference of Non-Aligned nations, and in New York very recently.

Mr Prime Minister, since we last met, many significant developments have taken place in Asia which will have far-reaching repercussions on our region of Southeast Asia. Your visit, therefore, is most opportune because it affords us the opportunity to discuss and exchange views on matters that concern the future of our two countries and of this region.

At our meeting this morning, we have had a most useful exchange of views and experiences and my colleagues and I were very much impressed and enlightened by your efforts in safeguarding the independence and integrity of your country.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay a special tribute to your leadership and the role you have played in promoting the national aspirations of your people and the cause of peace and stability of your country. Your untiring efforts for more than a decade in search of a lasting solution to your country's problems has won you the high admiration of all of us here and indeed of all peace loving peoples of the world.

Mr Prime Minister, I would like to emphasise that both our countries and our peoples share the same common ideals and aspirations. Your Government and mine are committed to achieving the common goals of eliminating poverty and of giving

a better life to our peoples. It is necessary, therefore, to modernise the outlook of our peoples and implement imaginative economic plans in accordance with our democratic way of life.

At the same time, Mr Prime Minister, we are also committed to the defence of our sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence against any form of interference. We are fully aware of the role you have played and your determination to safeguard the independence and integrity of your country. On our part, we in Malaysia, too, have been faced with similar problems which we are attempting to solve to the best of our ability. It is through our individual efforts in bringing about peace and stability in our respective countries that we can ensure peace and stability of Southeast Asia.

Mr Prime Minister, it is with this sense of concern for the peace, security and economic well-being of the region that my Government, jointly with the Governments of Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia and Singapore, have taken the bold step of issuing a Declaration in which we stated our determination to exert necessary efforts to secure the recognition of and respect for Southeast Asia as a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality, free from any form or manner of interference by outside Powers.

We trust that our determination to stand on our own feet and be left alone to manage our affairs will persuade countries outside this region and, in particular, the Super Powers, to keep this region free from outside interference and conflicts.

Mr Prime Minister, you will agree with me that no efforts should be spared in our search for a peaceful solution to the problems of Southeast Asia that will bring lasting peace, progress and development. Parallel efforts by our Governments towards achieving the same aim would enhance the efforts of co-operation between our two countries as well as of the region as a whole.

I am happy to say that this co-operation is already reflected in many fields as evidenced by your country's participation in our development Seminars, SEAMEC and other programmes. It is our hope that this co-operation will abound further in the spirit of the friendly and traditional ties that link our two countries.

Mr Prime Minister, although this is your first visit here, I hope you will find in Malaysia the same warmth and friendship of a people who are not unlike the people of your own country. The programme arranged for your visit tomorrow to a typical land development scheme will give you an opportunity to see our people in their daily pursuit. You would notice our traditions and culture blend with the same characteristics that sustain our respective approaches to a happy and better life. I am comforted by the thought that these same characteristics are preserved and are kept apace with the rapid changes in science and technology.

In conclusion, may I say how pleased we are that your first visit to Malaysia should take place at this auspicious time when we are hosting the 6th SEAP Games. We are indeed honoured to be host to this Games in which your country, Laos, is participating. This event, besides bringing together youths from the six participating countries for a healthy competition in sports, will, I am sure, also strengthen the existing bond of friendship and solidarity among them.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, may I now ask you to join me in a toast to His Highness, Prince Souvanna Phoume, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Laos, to wish him continued good health and success in his endeavours to bring peace, security and economic prosperity for the Kingdom of Laos and her peoples.