

WELCOMING REMARKS BY THE PRIME MINISTER AT THE DINNER IN HONOUR OF PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA, THE RT. HON'BLE GOUGH WHITLAM, AT SRI TAMAN, KUALA LUMPUR ON 29<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY, 1974

Mr Prime Minister, Mrs Whitlam, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is a great pleasure for me, on behalf of the Government and people of Malaysia and on my own behalf, to extend to you, Mr Prime Minister, to Mrs Whitlam and to the members of your party, a very warm welcome to Malaysia.

You are, of course, no stranger to us, but this is a particularly happy occasion for me to welcome you here for the first time as the distinguished Prime Minister of Australia. In the last year since you assumed that high office, you have been a fresh wind of change in this part of the world and you have brought courage, vigour and a new vision to the problems which have beset us for so long. We welcome you, therefore, Mr Prime Minister, not only as an old and valued friend of Malaysia but as a statesman who has made a vivid and constructive impact on the affairs of this region.

May I also add that both my wife and I are especially pleased that you are accompanied on this occasion by Mrs Whitlam, whose presence here gives us a particular pleasure. During your short stay with us, I look forward to the stimulation of your company as well as to the opportunity of renewing a friendship built over many years of encounters.

Over the next few days, Mr Prime Minister, you will no doubt reacquaint yourself with some aspects of the Malaysian scene that you have become familiar with during your previous visits to Malaysia. As you will see, we are in the midst of vast and exciting changes which are designed to ensure a better life for all our people. There is a certain air of urgency surrounding all these developments which can be seen even by a casual observer.

I trust you will also be happy to see Australia's part in Malaysia's development. The Trolak Utara scheme which you will be visiting represents an investment towards a better and more

prosperous Malaysia. It is in schemes like Trolak Utara that we in Malaysia are attempting to break the backbone of rural poverty. The Second Malaysia Plan, the mid-term review of which was completed recently, indicated that we have made substantial progress in achieving our objective. However, we are not complacent. We are determined to maintain and indeed accelerate the momentum of development over the next few crucial years in order to achieve self-sustaining growth. However, in these efforts, we greatly welcome the continued co-operation of our friends and well-wishers. We in Malaysia are deeply appreciative of the assistance which you and Australia have already extended us.

Mr Prime Minister.

The relations between our two countries, Australia and Malaysia, have always been characterised by great cordiality and close friendship. Our long historical association and the sharing of common ideals and aspirations have provided a stable foundation for such relations, but much of the credit for the present gratifying state of affairs must be attributed to the genuine spirit of co-operation that have infused our dealings with each other in trade, economic, political, educational and defence matters. It is my hope that we can continue to work together for the common cause of bringing our two countries and peoples even closer together. The sympathy and understanding that we have learnt to extend to each other's problems and aspirations is by no means a common commodity in international relations. It is, therefore, something of value that we have to keep in trust for our two countries and for our two peoples. It is also something which we shall need to call upon in facing the uncertainties and problems in the years ahead.

Looking around our part of the globe, Mr Prime Minister, it is clear that the East Asia-Pacific region is in the throes of momentous change. More and more countries from within and outside the region have increasingly recognised that the politics of conflict are inherently sterile and that new approaches have to be devised to assure the common future. The habits of confrontation, however, have been with us a long time and we all need to proceed deliberately to foster trust and goodwill, to replace the fear and the suspicion that have permeated past relations in our region.

In this endeavour, there is no real substitute for a slow, careful and time consuming approach. We must begin from what we have

in common, starting from present realities and working up towards ever-bigger and better goals. For us in Southeast Asia, Mr Prime Minister, ASEAN is our hope for a future in which as developing countries we can seek our own political and economic destinies unhindered by the conflicts and interests of the external powers. It is a modest beginning, but it is an earnest and serious attempt to do things by ourselves and for ourselves. This is, in itself, an essential first step we must take if we are going to eventually develop the confidence and the capacity to play a meaningful role in the concerns of a wider region.

I am aware, Mr Prime Minister, of the enlightened approach that you bring to bear to the affairs of this region. You yourself are perhaps one of the most important factors for change, in the last year or so, in this region. I am certain that we are working towards common objectives—for peace, for stability and for progress in this part of the world. The vigour and commitment that you bring to the quest for a better tomorrow for our region, has our admiration and our support. We appreciate, Mr Prime Minister, the sympathy and the understanding that you have openly displayed for the efforts of ASEAN towards the same end.

This morning we have had a very useful exchange of views on all these matters—international and bilateral. It was indeed very pleasant to be able to talk to you freely and frankly and in a relaxed atmosphere on all these important matters and I find that we both hold the same views on most of these things. There will be other opportunities, both formal and informal, for us to meet again in the next few days and I look forward, Mr Prime Minister, to a further exchange of views with you on matters of common concern to both our countries.

In the meantime, may I once again, say how happy we are to have you and Mrs Whitlam here with us and once again to extend to you both the warmest of welcome for an interesting and an enjoyable stay.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I now invite you to join me in a toast to the good health of the Prime Minister of Australia and Mrs Whitlam, to the Government and people of Australia.