

Knighthood she has been *transformed* into the female equivalent of a Knighthood—a "Lady." I hope when we get home she will always behave as a lady!

Your Highness. Your Excellency. Ladies and Gentlemen, this is not an occasion on which I should make a long speech. In fact, the appropriate theme of my speech on such an occasion could in fact be condensed to a very few words—I am grateful to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth for Her graciousness. and I thank all the members of the St. John Ambulance Association for their hard work and dedication which has made this occasion possible.

Thank you.

## THE NATIONAL MOSQUE

PERMANENT TRIBUTE TO TUNKU ABDUL  
RAHMAN PUTRA AL-HAJ

*Masjid Negara—the National Mosque—was described by Tun Abdul Razak as "an everlasting tribute to our great national leader. Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj, the father of the nation. and a monument of our national independence. He said this at the official opening of the Mosque by His Majesty The Yang di-Pertuan Agong on 27th August. 1967.*

On this holy day. that is Friday, when all Muslims throughout the world forget their differences and enmity and assemble in mosques to perform the "Friday Prayer", we the people of Malaysia offer our thanks to God the Almighty for having blessed us with a majestic and historic National Mosque. We are also thankful for Dull Yang Maha Mulia Seri Paduka Baginda Yang di-Pertuan Agong to have graciously consented to perform the opening ceremony of this Mosque.

The desire to build this big Mosque for this country was first mooted after our country achieved its independence on 31st

August, 1957. It was intended to be a permanent monument of the independence of the then Federation of Malaya and as a gift from the people and the nation to the Yang Teramat Mulia Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj as a token of our gratitude and appreciation for his services and wisdom in guiding the Federation of Malaya towards independence. Thus the money spent for the construction of the National Mosque does not only come from the Central Government but also from the State Governments and the people generally.

It is my personal desire and wish and also that of the organisers of the National Mosque that this Mosque be named "Masjid Tunku Abdul Rahman \*". However the Tunku himself suggested that it was more appropriate to call it "Masjid Negara". Thus today's ceremony is of great significance in the history of our Nation for the National Mosque will be an everlasting tribute to our great national leader and the father of our nation and a monument of our national independence.

As Chairman of the Committee for the construction of the National Mosque I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to all members of the Committee, its Secretary Tuan Haji Ismail bin Panjang Aris and members of the State and District Committees for their efforts in collecting funds for building this Mosque. I also wish to thank the donors from the various races who have generously contributed towards the mosque building fund amounting to \$1,007,000. I am unable to mention all their names as there are thousands of them. But many of those who donated large amounts are present here this morning.

Also I would like to offer my sincere thanks to their Highnesses the Rulers and His Excellency the Yang di-Pertuan Negara Singapore and Their Excellencies the Governors for having generously presented a chandelier each which we now see in this Mosque.

A large portion of the contribution came from non-Muslims. This is clear evidence that the multi-racial inhabitants of Malaysia from various creeds and religions do have goodwill and understanding among themselves and they are ever ready to help one another.

It has always been the policy of the Malaysian Government to strengthen further the spirit of goodwill and friendship among

the various communities drawn from various religious groups in this country so that every person has his or her rightful place in this country and that one day they will regard themselves as members of one nation irrespective of their religious belief.

The contributions received from the non-Muslims are clear evidence that the people generally accept and uphold the policy of the Government.

As provided in the Constitution, i.e.. that though Islam is the official Religion, the Government has guaranteed the freedom of worship and the right to profess any religious belief to all in our country.

A mosque in the true sense of the word is not only a place of worship, but as we know from the history of the evolution of Islam, especially during the time of the Prophet Muhammad and his Disciples, is a place where Muslims congregate to discuss and resolve problems of day-to-day life including problems pertaining to religious tenets, public welfare, social and academic.

This Mosque stands on 13 and a half acres of ground, five acres of which is taken up by the building itself. The Grand Prayer Hall is 22.500 sq. ft and can accommodate not less than 8.000 worshippers. In addition there is another all purpose hall which can accommodate 500 persons. This Mosque also has a library and offices. Adjoining it there is a mausoleum for our national heroes.

As a National Mosque and the biggest in the country it is hoped that this mosque will serve as a centre for the research and development of Islam. Similarly it is hoped that a centre for higher Islamic studies will be established in this mosque so that it will become a symbol of the importance and the progress of our religion Islam and the beacon of Islam throughout Malaysia.

*(Tun Razak disclosed in the course of his speech that India had presented a valuable silver chair of very fine workmanship for use<sup>05</sup> the seat for the Imam of the National Mosque).*