

Mr. Chairman, Dr. Sekhar,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Excellencies,

**ADDRESS BY Y.A.B. DATUK HUSSEIN ONN,  
ACTING PRIME MINISTER AT THE OPENING  
OF INTERNATIONAL RUBBER CONFERENCE 1975,  
AT NIRWANA HALL, HILTON HOTEL, ON  
MONDAY, 20TH OCTOBER 1975 AT 9.00 AM**

to  
declare open the combined International  
Rubber Conference 1975 and 100th Golden  
Jubilee Conference.

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Mr. Chairman, Dr. Sekhar,

Distinguished Delegates,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is indeed a privilege and honour for me to be here this morning to declare open the combined International Rubber Conference 1975 and RRI Golden Jubilee Conference.

We have just been told that no less than one thousand participants from thirty-five countries are present here with us. This is quite a record.

The Chairman, Dr. Sekhar, described the occasion as historic in the annals of the Malaysian rubber industry. This is the first time that a truly recognised international rubber conference is being held in Malaysia. The conferences in 1960 and 1968, while having substantial international participation, were organised on a more domestic auspices.

3. The operating consideration in the initiative of the MRRDB in seeking Malaysia as a complementary venue for IRC 1975 is undoubtedly the fact that the Rubber Research Institute of Malaysia celebrates its fifty years of existence this year. Malaysia as a whole is appreciative of the substantial contributions and achievements

of the RRIM and legitimately proud of the international reputation this Institute enjoys. The occasion is, therefore, indeed historic and of tremendous significance to this country. Let me, on behalf of the Government of Malaysia associate myself with the sentiments expressed by the Director, Tuan Haji Ani Arope, to the International Conference Committee and the Rubber Industry's Association of Japan for their cooperation and assistance in choosing Malaysia as one of the venues for the International Rubber Conference this year.

4. In celebrating the fifty years of existence of the RRIM, we are also reminded that it now almost a century since Heves arrived in this region from the Amazon Valley. Henry Wickham took several months to transport native rubber seeds of Heves from Brazil to Kew Garden. After germination at Kew Garden, the materials took another few months in their movement from the U.K. to Asia and South East Asia. In the context of the time factors and the inefficient communication system involved in those days, it was left to the determined, devoted and far-sighted policies and perseverance of Henry Ridley that finally enabled Heves to be tamed in this region as a successful plantation crop of great economic and industrial

significance. It is said that Ridley was described by sceptics in those days as the "mad scientist" because of his persistence in pushing rubber as an important alternative crop.

5. Things have progressed from those days and the vision that Ridley saw has become more than a reality. From his early pioneering work has grown a rubber industry in Malaysia, which exported last year 1.5 million tons of natural rubber representing 43 per cent of the world's natural rubber supply. Two factors have contributed to the spectacular development. Firstly, the progress in scientific research and technology, and secondly, the sophisticated, efficient communication links that have become available. The world has

indeed grown smaller from the days of people, Henry Wickham and Henry Ridley. International rapport and exchange of information have become the order of the day for scientific and technological developments and are now becoming imperative and urgent to maintain the tempo of progress in all walks of life. It is in this context that we are meeting today as an international rubber community. The Government of Malaysia is indeed pleased to see so many of you, world experts in your own area of rubber endeavour, here in Malaysia to share and exchange ideas, new concepts and new innovations. On behalf of the Government, I offer you a very warm welcome. I hope that your visit will not only be rewarding and fruitful in the deliberations and discussions to follow but it will also be a happy and <sup>an</sup> enjoyable one.

in seeing a little of Malaysia and our people.

6. As the Director of the RRI has indicated, the IRC and Golden Jubilee sessions promise a sumptuous scientific and technological feast to the professionals amongst us. The large number of papers, the spectrum of coverage and the calibre of participants, certainly, are in keeping with the intrinsic excellent elasticity and resilience of the natural product. To absorb the voluminous new information presented and conduct a searching analysis of the findings, I believe that all the participants would certainly need to imbibe the stress/strain characteristics of natural rubber. I do not wish to keep you away from such an exciting and stimulating event for too long. However, it would be appropriate

on this occasion for me to mention a few issues that are pertinent in the context of the international community, in general, and Malaysia in particular.

7. As finance is also one of my portfolios in this country, I must obviously start with the peculiar economic situation facing all of us. The world as a whole is going through an economic turmoil. Recession, inflation, currency uncertainties, unemployment and balance of payments problems are phrases on the lips of economists, industrialists, planners and politicians. Traditional approaches and solutions to redress economic swings by sophisticated fine-tuning, as the economists call this, are becoming less effective. Developing countries are finding

their primary exports receiving less and less returns. At the same time, manufactured products imported into developing countries are costing more and more. In these circumstances, development plans and growth are adversely affected and serious socio-economic problems become manifest.

8. On the other hand, the world as a whole is demanding an expanding supply of raw materials to keep the tempo of progress. A raw material crisis is predicted; energy problems are already with us. At the rate the world exploits non-renewable resources the situation can become more alarming.

Renewable resources such as natural rubber certainly takes on a new significance in the considerations for tomorrow. I am aware of this stronger new image that natural rubber

has in world consuming markets. However, I am concerned of the socio-economic problems related to expanding the natural rubber supply in the context of diminishing returns for natural rubber in the world market. An equitable solution must be found for this problem. The solution calls for both national and international efforts. The national effort must obviously relate to science, technology, modernisation and efficiency, and this must apply to all primary export commodities.

9. Malaysia is the world's largest exporter of a number of commodities of importance - rubber, palm oil, tin, tropical timber and pepper. We have still some additional nine million acres of land available

for cultivation in Peninsular Malaysia alone. Our plans for self-sufficiency in rice production will be achieved in the near future. These are powerful resource assets in the context of our 12 million population. But in spite of all these advantages there are a number of factors, both internal and external, that must be reckoned with to sustain our development plans. These are, the dominant small farms in agriculture, the widely scattered uneconomic units and relative backwardness of the smallholdings, problems of internal and external marketing, competition from synthetics and substitutes, violent fluctuations in prices of commodities in the international market and tariff and non-tariff barriers.

10. We are tackling the internal problems of uneconomic farm sizes through massive new land development schemes and land consolidation. Through the organised approach of specialist government agencies such as the Federal Land Development Authority, Rubber Industry Smallholders Development Authority and State Economic Development Corporations, land utilisation and productivity per unit area are being put on a sound economic base. Processing and marketing operations too are being centralised in the small farm sectors. This process of conversion of uneconomic, inefficient and backward small farm operations into organised, modernised, economically viable units is imperative for socio-economic development. It is in this context that the scientific and technological

input not only becomes relevant but vital to the successful changeover. It is this subject of scientific and technological input which is also pertinent to you and this conference.

11. Malaysia is in a unique position with regard to science and technology of rubber because of the organised scientific and technological support built up for the rubber industry through the world-wide Malaysian Rubber Research and Development Board system. Through this body Malaysia has developed an integral approach in research from growing through production, processing and marketing to manufacture. This integral approach in research from growing through production, processing and

~~marketing to manufacture.~~ This integrated effort is carried out through Rubber Research Institute of Malaysia, the Malaysian Rubber Producers' Research Association in the U.K. and the Malaysian Rubber Bureaux in ten important consuming centres of the world.

12. The Director of the RRIM has already traced the development of the Institute from its inception fifty years ago. The MRPRA has been in existence since 1939 and the Malaysian Rubber Bureaux were initiated immediately after the Second World War. The Activities of all these units have been expanded by the MRRDB in keeping with the evolution of the country as the world's leader in export and also as a consequence of changing consumer requirements. The contributions of the RRIM in production and

processing and the MRPRA in vulcanisation chemistry and consumption technology are too well known to you for repetition here. The MRRDB has now set up a Rubber Economics and Planning Unit, a \$10 million Technology Centre for the RRIM and permanent laboratory and technological facilities for the MRPRA. These new facilities reflect the confidence and importance Malaysia places on natural rubber.

13. It is our contention that an organised research approach in a developing economy cannot afford the luxury of remaining isolated from the pressures of national development plans. The activities must be integrated from the conception of an idea to implementation of an innovation into the national development fabric. Such a research system therefore, while having executive

responsibilities in all research endeavour, must also absorb initiating responsibilities in development programmes and catalyzing responsibilities in the implementation process.

14. The effectiveness of such an integrated approach by MRRDB in rubber has paid handsome dividends for this country. In the national context, the success of the Rubber Research Institute in all matters of production and processing has enabled the country to establish national implementing agencies in production, processing and marketing with considerable success. With the new Technology Centre in the RRIM the efforts of the Federal Industrial Development Authority towards encouraging the establishment of rubber-based industries in Malaysia would take on a new tempo. Malaysia today only

consumes 30,000 tons of its rubber in manufacturing operations. The target set for rubber-based industries in the 1980s is the consumption of over 300,000 tons representing a ten-fold increase. Already a number of new rubber-based industries have appeared in the Malaysian scene and a carbon black manufacturing facility will come on stream by the middle of 1976. The Malaysian Rubber Research and Development Board has been directed to give priority attention to this effort through the combined facilities of the RRIM, the MRPRA and the MRB units.

15. The success of our research efforts has also contributed substantially to the competitive strength of natural rubber in world markets. Cost efficiency has been improved by the development of

high yielding clones, yield stimulation and novel exploitation techniques. Processing and presentation have been modernised to make natural rubber a real industrial performance material. Research in consumer technology and new areas of uses are enabling natural rubber to meet sophisticated and stringent demands of exacting and discriminating users. There are many more developments in the field, in the labs and in the factories. I have no doubt you will be hearing some of these at this Conference and assessing their importance and implications.

16. I believe this unique Malaysian experience in rubber research and development effort can be of significant benefit to draw guidelines for the development of an effective

policy of science and technology in support of other important commodities for Malaysia in particular and other developing regions in general.

17. Malaysia places great importance in science and technology generally. The importance is manifest in our national ideology - the Rukunegara and our development plans. The build-up of seats of higher learning, technological institutions, industrial research facilities, and professional scientific bodies in Malaysia in the last few years reflects this national consciousness. As a developing country, Malaysia cannot afford to do ivory-tower research. Our scientific endeavours must, as a priority, be geared to efficient exploitation of our resources and prosecution

of our development plan. Scientific manpower is a basic scarce commodity in most developing countries and Malaysia is no exception. The development of scientific expertise, their training and exploitation must be influenced and motivated by all these considerations. In the country's science and technology programme, national planners, training institutions, research establishments and implementing organisations must come together at all levels to formulate the correct strategies and coordinate activities. It is towards this end that the Hon'ble Prime Minister declared early this year that the Cabinet has agreed in principle to the setting up of a national scientific and development council. This council, it is hoped, will come into operation before the end of this year.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

18. I have mentioned all these domestic considerations, experiences and plans as I believe that some of them are certainly relevant in the international context. Amongst you, there are specialists from the consuming, trading and production sectors of natural rubber, apart from the participation of specialists from seats of higher learning and the synthetic rubber sector. It would be useful for our visitors to appreciate and understand the underlying philosophy of the Malaysian approach to our exports in general and to rubber in particular. We firmly believe in doing our homework effectively. I refer here to all activities within our control to make our products imbibe the latest in science and technology, become cost

efficient, quality conscious, and reflect modern presentation requirements and technical standards. We would like you not only to discuss these at this Conference but see first hand how these changes are being implemented in the plantations, small-holdings and the factories in the country. Undoubtedly, there is much more to be done. The standards of natural rubber have to be ever refined and improved. Drawbacks and permissive subjective approaches must be eliminated. To achieve this there ~~must be~~ must be an effective dialogue between producers and consumers. The Conference will afford consumer representatives to voice their requirements and satisfaction or dissatisfaction of progress made and standards achieved. It is our national policy to enhance the image of Malaysia as an

exporter of quality product, second to none. In this context, we have set up organised machinery for testing, inspection and policing of standards.

19. The international problem transcends our capabilities and requires support and understanding from the world community, especially from the developed area. Active discussions are being held in various world forums to find solutions to the instability in prices of commodities. I believe for world order there is an imperative need to find an effective and lasting solution to this major problem of primary commodities facing instability in prices.

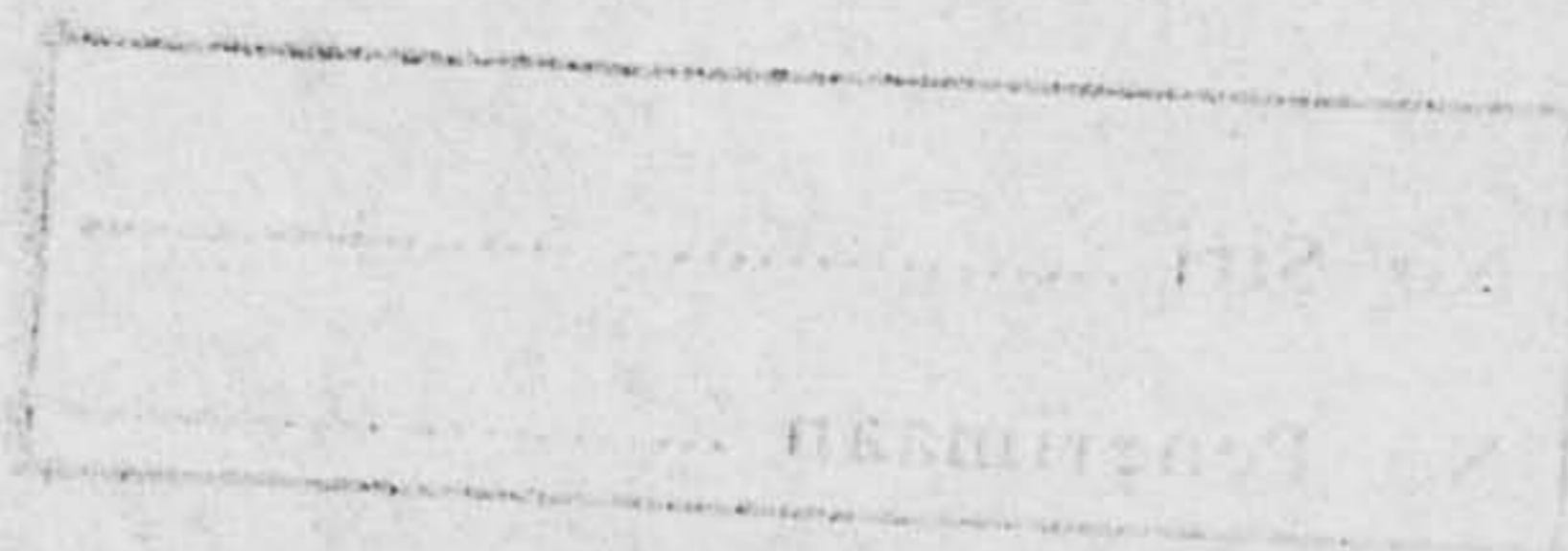
20. Ladies and gentlemen, in concluding this address, it is appropriate for me to congratulate the Rubber Research Institute of Malaysia on their Golden Jubilee and wish many more successful and rewarding years of research and development activities.

21. Finally, it is my privilege and pleasure to wish you a week of fruitful and enjoyable deliberations and declare open the IRC 1975 and Golden Jubilee Sessions.

Thank you.



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