

SPEECH BY THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
AT THE ANNUAL DINNER OF THE INSTI-
TUTION OF ENGINEERS, FEDERATION OF
MALAYA, AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA,
KUALA LUMPUR ON 3RD JUNE, 1961

Mr Chairman,

I am glad indeed to have the opportunity to be present here tonight and to be given the privilege of proposing the toast of the Institution of Engineers, Federation of Malaya. As Deputy Prime Minister, and especially as Minister of Rural Development, I think it is singularly fitting that my first public speech since my return to duty from Mecca should be made to such an important professional group as the engineers of Malaya, who are playing, and who are destined to play an even greater part in the all round national development of this country, particularly in the next five years.

Engineers, whether they are civil, mechanical, electrical or mining experts, are very practical men. Together with architects, building draftsmen and workers, it is the job of the engineers to give concrete reality to the hopes and plans, and sometimes the dreams, of politicians and administrators. Given the authority, the money and the opportunity they go right ahead. The more difficult the task the more it seems to delight an engineer. He seems to regard his profession as a great adventure, his tasks as a continuing challenge to his skill. He is not given much to talking about his work, but he can be prouder than a father of his new-born son about a newly-completed job of work well done.

The Engineers of Malaya are rapidly changing the face of the country in a way in which a layman like myself can only regard as a marvel. I must admit, of course, that I get a great thrill myself when I see their work in action or their jobs completed. Hardly a day passes by in the new Malaya without the Prime Minister, my Cabinet colleagues, or myself opening a new road, bridge, dam irrigation channel, power house, microwave station, telephone exchange, factory or office. There are so many such events that they are becoming common place.

Yet everything they have achieved so far is only a fraction of what the new Malaya intends to do, and no one gets a greater kick out of the prospect of all this creative construction than the engineer. Let me tell you, Gentlemen, and the whole country that Malaya needs and is going to need every engineer she can lay her hands on, if the Alliance Government is to bring to complete fruition the great Five-Year Plan we are tackling in the national interest.

That is why I am very glad to see two important personal developments taking place in the world of Malayan engineering—the establishment and development of your Institution and the growth in the number of Malayan engineers, graduating not only from universities overseas but, even far more important, from our own University of Malaya.

There are about 300 engineers in all the main categories of the profession in Malaya today, more than 80% of these are in the Government service. Next Saturday twenty-three engineering Graduates of the University of Malaya will receive their degrees, and of these fifteen have already joined the Government, and twelve more Graduates will be returning this year from studies overseas, also to join the Government service.

The student strength of the Engineering Faculty of the University of Malaya has risen by 50% since Merdeka. In the 1957-58 session the total number of engineering students was ninety-two of whom thirty-one were in their first year. This year the total strength is 159, and the number of new students of engineering is fifty-five. This is a very healthy development indeed, and shows that ambitious young men in Malaya are realising that a wealth of opportunity and achievement lies ahead in this country for all those who take up engineering. If this healthy rate of development continues, and there is every reason why it should (and certainly the Government will do everything possible to encourage it) then the time will not be very far distant when we can proudly say that Malaya is able to produce her own engineers for her own needs.

The establishment of your Institution is the other healthy sign of engineering progress. Although your Institution is only two years old, already its membership or associate membership embraces more than a third of the engineers in Malaya, civil,

mechanical or electrical. So far, I understand, no mining engineers have joined. In my opinion every engineer in the country should belong to this Institution in their own professional interest of seeing that standards are set and maintained.

I am aware that there is still much to do and it is your hope to join the Commonwealth Engineering Society. It is also your hope to take part in the Commonwealth Engineering Conference in future and your ambition as a result of these two moves is to achieve official recognition by the Federation Government. Therefore, it is in the interest of all engineers to join together in this great effort to build up the engineering profession. I can foresee the day when the Institution of Engineers includes every member of the profession in the country, sets its own examination, and has its own building and library for research and reference.

If you can increase your membership to embrace all engineers, and if you continue on the courses you have already charted, I can assure you that Government recognition will be forthcoming at the appropriate time, because there can be no stronger asset for engineering in Malaya than a truly representative authority which can speak and act for the profession as a whole.

It is a great privilege and pleasure, therefore, for me to wish your organisation every success in your efforts and your growth. Mr Chairman, Gentlemen, with every confidence in the bright prospects for the future of your professional organisation I give you the toast "The Institution of Engineers, Federation of Malaya".