

SPEECH BY THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AT  
THE ALUMNI DINNER AT THE UNIVERSITY  
OF MALAYA, KUALA LUMPUR ON 5TH  
AUGUST, 1961

Mr Chairman and Gentlemen,

I was very pleased indeed to receive the invitation to address this reunion dinner of professional men—doctors, dentists and pharmacists—who are members of an organisation which must surely hold the record in Malaya for having the longest name.

It rolls off the tongue extremely well—the Alumni Association of the King Edward VII College of Medicine, Singapore, and Faculty of Medicine, University of Malaya. And there you have it, a nice description—I almost said prescription—a description which Malaysians of my generation and before that, as well as you gentlemen yourselves, fortunately abbreviate the "The Alumni".

I rather suspect that whoever was responsible for your popular name must have been a gentleman who liked playing with words. I can imagine him saying "Alumni?" That is Latin for "All of us". And what does that lead me to? Nothing less than that a line of a song, "And so say all of us". And where does that come from? Well, "For they are jolly good fellows", of course. And what are our members? Jolly good fellows, of course. Therefore, we could call the Association "The Alumni".

And in the past day or so I believe that you have been getting together in the spirit of "all of us" apart from a business meeting, everything from ronggeng to golf. That is how it should be. So I am very happy indeed to be here tonight to have the opportunity, not only to meet many old friends, but to have the opportunity of speaking in reply on behalf of the guests.

Seeing all our hosts are either doctors, dentists or pharmacists—and none of the guests are—perhaps I should really be replying on behalf of our patients. I am not too sure whether I am the right person to select for this occasion, as is not often a patient gets an opportunity to say more than "Ah!" to doctors or dentists.

Usually most of your patients feel much smaller in their own estimation as men and women when they have to answer questions put to them in the best bedside manner by doctors or dentists. Our friends, the pharmacists, make us feel more like our normal selves. They don't ask any questions, they just give you the cure, and tell you how to take it. Of course, you have to pay for their remarks, just as you have to pay for being questioned and probed and prodded by doctors or dentists.

I mentioned I was not sure whether I am the right person to speak on behalf of the guests, because as far as I know I am sound in wind and limb, cannot remember when I last saw a doctor—have no complaints about my teeth, although I visit a dentist once in a while—and only occasionally have any recourse to pills or potions, nothing more complicated than an aspirin.

Certainly, I have no medical, dental or pharmaceutical qualifications, nor am I a graduate of a University. I suppose the nearest I can get professionally to our hospitable hosts is to say that I am President of the St. John Ambulance Association, which everyone knows has something to do with first aid.

Patients or guests, whichever we may be, all of us have long held the members of "The Alumni" in a special respect and esteem. Ever since the King Edward VII College of Medicine was founded Malaysians have been graduating there, and today members of "The Alumni" are spread throughout the Federation of Malaya and Singapore and beyond, valued members of the community wherever they are.

We all know that in the past the Alumni have their difficulties of recognition, both professional and personal, but fortunately with Merdeka those days of discrimination are long past, and Malayan doctors, dentists and pharmacists, graduates of our University of Malaya, serve the people and move among them today with all the special honour which ordinary men and women always accord to members of the medical professions. In Government service or in private practice they are invaluable assets to the nation, and my only regret is that there are not more of them.

As the Malayan nation grows and expands in social progress, we will need every doctor, dentist and pharmacist we can get. As you know, in our big rural development plan we are giving

a high priority to the establishment of medical and dental clinics. There will never be any unemployment for doctors or dentists or pharmacists in Malaya, and I look forward to the day when we can say we have as high a ratio of these professional men to each 10,000 a population as in more highly developed countries.

The faculty of Medicine in the University of Malaya in Singapore is doing a very good work indeed in helping to supply our needs for graduates in these fields, and it will not be very long, when we have set up a new Faculty of Medicine in the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur, before more and more young men and women will be graduating from there to supplement the good work of Singapore and help to meet our national needs.

We, your guests, both as patients actual or potential, and as citizens, therefore hold present members of the Alumni in high regard, and we are one with you in hoping that the ranks of the Alumni swell rapidly in the years ahead.

Mr Chairman and Gentlemen, on behalf of the guests, I thank you very much indeed for the hospitality and congeniality of this very pleasant evening, and wish the Alumni prosperity and progress in fellowship and achievements.