

SPEECH BY THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
AT THE OPENING OF THE ASIAN REGIONAL
SEMINAR AND CONFERENCE OF THE ASSO-
CIATED COUNTRY WOMEN OF THE WORLD
AT THE DEWAN TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN,
KUALA LUMPUR, ON 27TH MARCH, 1961

Your Majesty, Your Excellencies, Hon'ble Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure—and if I may say so—with great courage that I stand here to address you this morning.

It is with pleasure, because I am delighted, on behalf of the Government and the people of the Federation of Malaya, to welcome as our guests here in Malaya, such a distinguished gathering of representatives, from so many nations, and I do hope that not only will you enjoy your deliberations in this Conference, but also that you will enjoy your stay in Malaya as much as we enjoy having you here.

It is with courage that I address you, because so far in my life I have only had practice in standing up to, and facing one woman—my wife! Even that it is seldom I am able to have my own way or to have the last say in things. I am sure that my fellow-men will agree with me, that it requires a brave spirit and real courage to stand up and face so many members of the fair sex, as are gathered in this Hall today; particularly when one remembers that your Association is in fact representatives of no less than six million women!

In fact, as I stand here now, I face a potential force which is greater than the combined strength of the Armies of Napoleon, Alexander the Great, and Hitler.

This great potential force for good, in the ranks of the womanhood of Asia, has been recognised by some of the outstanding leaders of our time.

The great Mahatma Gandhi—if I may quote his own words, said "I am firmly of the opinion that India's salvation depends on the sacrifice and enlightenment of our Women".

In Malaya, we too have always recognised the importance of the part to be played by women in our task of nation-building, and I should like to take this opportunity today of thanking the women of Malaya for the great support and contribution which they are giving towards our National Development Programme.

As you may already know, we here in Malaya have launched a nation-wide Rural Development Programme in which it is the declared and determined aim of our Government, that the maximum effort will be concentrated on the development of our country, with emphasis, first and foremost, on rural economic development.

Our National Rural Development Programme is designed in several Phases.

The first phase is one of Government action, in which our Government, the elected Government of the people, shoulder its responsibilities with regard to planning and the implementation of Government projects such as road-making, land development, health services, education services, veterinary services, agriculture improvement and similar services.

Our aim in this first phase is to gear all available Government resources at our command towards the maximum efficiency for the benefit of the rural people and to lay the foundation framework for development.

It is with pleasure, and with a certain amount of pride, that I am able to tell you here today that, with thanks to Almighty God, we have achieved a considerable measure of success in the first year of this national task.

The second phase of our Programme is "a call to action" by the people themselves to come forward and to give of their best in building a better and happier way of life on this foundation.

We realise, in Malaya, that the economic, cultural and social progress of any nation, lies in the hearts and minds of its people, and it is in this "call to action" by the people, that the wonderful weapon of womanhood, the weapon, with which your potential force of six million is equipped, can be used with tremendous effect; it is a weapon much more powerful than any which

belonged to the greatest Armed Forces of the world; it is a weapon against which, to this day, neither Man nor Modern Science has been able to invent any defence.

Ladies, there is no defence against the soft, persuasive voice of a woman.

But, ladies, to use this weapon, you must have plenty of ammunition, and I suggest that the basic task of any association such as yours, in any country, is to make sure that every woman, in every home, has a knowledge of the basic principles of progress, a clear definition of the direction of development and a true understanding of the part she can play in achieving the National aim.

The progress of any Nation is really only the sum total of the progress made in every home within that Nation, and I feel that the greatest contribution women can make towards the development and progress of their country is by the soft but persistent in every home—persuading, pushing and inspiring their husbands and sons to greater efforts each day; efforts in the form of hard work in their own daily lives, dedicated to the development of their country.

While persuading and inspiring their husbands and sons to playing their full part in the development they themselves can also play their part. By their own endeavour they can improve their homes—by having a better condition in the home, a better and more balanced diet for their family. Also the women can help to supplement the family income by establishing small or cottage industries in the house so that they and their daughters can do a useful work in their spare time. Above all by their weapon of soft and persuasive voice and by their own efforts and example they can generate a spirit of change and progress in the homes. Therefore our women can play a great and vital part in the development and progress of our nations. It is the problem for an association such as yours to direct women's thought to all these matters and to train and educate them in the basic principles of progress and in our National aim. It is only by a full and real understanding of these aims and principles that the women can play their great part in nation building and bringing progress and happiness to our homes, to the people in the country. Your

Association, therefore, has an important task to perform in this region. Bearing this in mind, I would like to wish you all success in your discussion and deliberations at this conference.

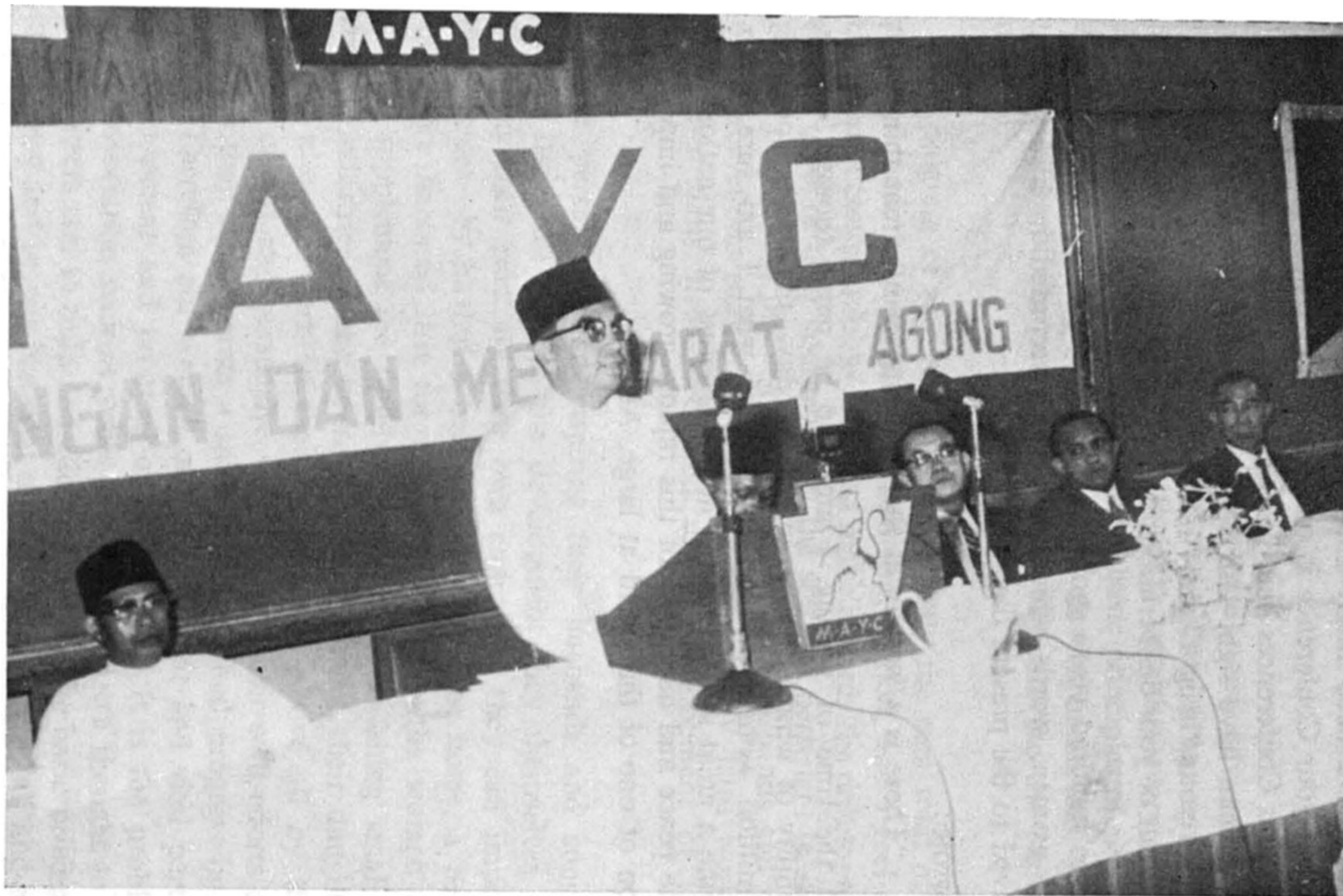
There have been many International Conference held in this Hall, but your Conference is one with a difference. The Members of previous Conferences here have been mostly men; the difference is that "man have sight but women have insight" and I am sure that with your "insight" and "intuition" we can expect great things as a result of your deliberations.

Three hundred years ago a famous historian wrote a few words about women, words which have been recorded in history and survived to the present day.

He wrote:

"There is a woman at the beginning of all great things."

At the time of writing, I am sure he never thought of the possibility of what is happening here today—that there would be six million women at the beginning of what I am sure, is to become a great stride forward in the progress of our nations and in the peace and happiness of this rapidly growing and impending region of one of the world at large, Asia.



Tun Abdul Razak sedang berucap di Majlis Pembukaan Persidangan Tahunan dan Mesyuarat Agung Pertubuhan Kelab Belia Malaya (M.A.Y.C.) di Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur pada 8hb April, 1961. (Gambar Jabatan Penerangan Malaysia).