

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER AT THE
DINNER IN HONOUR OF THE RT. HON'BLE MR
EDWARD HEATH, BRITISH PRIME MINISTER
AT SRI TAMAN, KUALA LUMPUR ON 12TH
JANUARY, 1971

Mr Prime Minister, Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure, Mr Prime Minister, to welcome you on your first official visit to Malaysia.

I do not know whether you realise it or not that you have the unique distinction of being the first British Prime Minister in office ever to visit this country. You realise that this historic event has taken place thirteen years after Malaysia had achieved independence although we were under British rule for more than a century.

Mr Prime Minister, we in Malaysia have had the privilege of knowing you before in your capacity as the Leader of the Opposition and also the privilege of knowing you before that when you were a member of the Conservative Government. You are known to be a man, not only of dedication, but also of great determination.

I had the privilege of listening to you at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in 1962 when you expounded with clarity and precision the very complex subject of the British proposal to enter the European Common Market. I admired how you expounded this difficult and complex subject off-the-cuff, without even a note in front of you. You, therefore, have a reputation of being a leader who is not only thorough with your work but also have a photographic memory.

Mr Prime Minister, you differ from us here as, when during our election time, we all held our breath in anxiety and trepidation but, in your case, you showed complete confidence of victory and, in fact, despite strong headwinds of gallup polls, you sailed triumphantly to victory as you did in the "Morning Cloud" from Sydney to Hobart a year before that in 1969. I think, Mr Prime Minister, you have taught me a lesson and I intend to take up

sailing in order to have a firmer hold on the helm of my Party's sailing boat to ensure that we will sail to victory smoothly in the forthcoming elections as you so ably did.

Mr Prime Minister, both our countries have very close and amicable relations; first, as between guardian and ward, and now, as two independent nations sharing common ideals and working together closely for the cause of peace and friendship among nations. We in Malaysia are grateful to the British Government and the British people for the assistance that they have continued to give us since we achieved independence, in the field of defence and, lately, although the previous Government had decided to withdraw all British troops from Singapore and Malaysia area by the end of 1971, you modified this policy the moment you took office as Prime Minister.

We greatly welcome your desire and that of your Government to continue to associate yourself with the defence of this area. Malaysia is a small developing nation in this somewhat turbulent region of Southeast Asia and our only wish is to live in peace and to be left alone to pursue our way of life. It is, therefore, of great importance that there should be a guarantee of stability in this region and your continued presence here will, to some extent, contribute towards this end.

Mr Prime Minister, as we scan the horizon of Southeast Asia, dark clouds are still looming which threaten our security and sovereignty. In order to maintain peace and stability in this region, we in Malaysia had proposed that there should be guaranteed neutralisation of Southeast Asia so that the nations of this area can get on with their own tasks of nation building free from threats and interference from outside.

It must be admitted that the necessary pre-requisite towards the achievement of this aim is that the free nations of Southeast Asia must be able to stand on their own feet and work together for the common good. Only by this means can they go forward together to transform this aim into a definite and effectual reality.

Mr Prime Minister, my colleagues and I hope that during your short visit here we shall be able to discuss matters of common interest and of common concern between our two countries. I have

no doubt that these discussions will be fruitful and beneficial to our two Governments. My only regret is that your visit is too short but perhaps you can rectify this next time.

Mr Prime Minister, since the new year, various parts of our country had been subjected to serious flooding. This was the biggest flood we ever had for more than forty years. There has been considerable damage to property, both Government and private and fifty two lives were lost.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank you, Mr Prime Minister, not only for your kind message of sympathy but also for the help which your Government has readily given to us in the form of helicopters and supplies of blankets, tents and assault boats. Also your Royal Engineers had rendered most valuable assistance in Johore and Malacca to replace damaged bridges. I should be grateful if you could convey the sincere gratitude of our Government and our people to all those concerned.

Mr Prime Minister, we are delighted to have you with us here in Malaysia. I shall meet you again very soon at another table across the Causeway on a different soil. Therefore, tomorrow, we don't say good-bye; we just say au revoir.

Gentlemen, I ask you to rise and join me in the toast to the good health of our guest of honour, Mr Heath, and to the Government and people of Britain.

Thank you.