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SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER AT THE
DINNER GIVEN IN HONOUR OF THE VISITING
COMMONWEALTH PRIME MINISTERS TO
MALAYSIA AT PARLIAMENT HOUSE, KUALA
LUMPUR ON 25TH JANUARY, 1971

Your Excellency Sir Dowda Jawara,¹ Your Excellency Sir Seretse Kama,² Your Excellencies Fellow Prime Ministers, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is indeed a pleasure and honour for us here in Malaysia to have the opportunity of welcoming such a distinguished group of leaders of no less than eight countries.

When I was preparing my speech, it occurred to me that there is no special term in the English language for a gathering of Prime Ministers in large numbers—as one talks about a flock of sheep, a school of fish—but the English language has so far failed to produce a descriptive word for Prime Ministers in the plural as we are here present to-night.

So, therefore, I have had to coin my own phrase.

As you know, shortly after the New Year, we in Malaysia suffered the disaster of serious flooding throughout the whole country from which many suffered considerable damage and hardship.

It was a sad incident from which we are still recovering, but to-night is a night for rejoicing.

Having suffered the hardship of flooding from water, I stand here surrounded not by a flood of water, but on this special occasion, we enjoy the pleasure and honour from a new type of flood, a flood of Prime Ministers to Malaysia.

Your Excellencies, I enjoyed so much my meeting with you last week during the course of the Commonwealth Conference in

1 President of Gambia.

2 President of Republic of Botswana.

Singapore, but to-night it is of even greater enjoyment among our own Malaysia people in having this excellent opportunity to entertain you all as our honoured guests on Malaysian soil.

I hope and trust that during your short visit to our country, you and your good ladies have had the opportunity of seeing our country; of what we are doing to bring to our people that measure of happiness and prosperity which they desire; and to meet them in the various fields of activities.

You would find that the people of Malaysia, although they come from diverse origins, of different religions, language and culture, they are nevertheless extremely friendly with one another and have an ardent desire to live in peace and happiness. I would have wished, Your Excellencies, that you would have the time to visit our people in their homes because they would extremely be happy to see you and to welcome you as they know that we in Malaysia and your own people in your respective countries have many things in common.

We are all countries which are in the process of evolution towards full development, in the process of nation-building and in the process of acquiring and establishing our individual national identity and sovereignty.

Your Excellencies, it is the aim of all of us at this stage of development to lay firmly and soundly the foundations of a strong economic structure so that our countries wherever they may be situated throughout the Globe, can offer to our various peoples not only the hope of progress and prosperity, but also to transform that hope into a tangible reality.

In fact, Your Excellencies, this common aim, which is the first and foremost priority of all developing countries, is, to my mind, the firmest bond with each other that we have in common.

We in Malaysia, since our Independence in 1957, have put the maximum of our unity and our efforts into development, and towards improving the standard of living of our people with the hope that when the ultimate aim is achieved, we will live as a happy and healthy nation and move forward steadily from being regarded by the World as a developing nation, so that we may,

for our peoples, in the near future, drop the label of developing nation and acquire a new mantle of an advancing nation.

I am sure that the same aim which is deep in the hearts of both my colleagues in the Government and the people in Malaysia, is equally near the hearts of you, Your Excellencies, and your peoples.

Therefore, Your Excellencies, the fulcrum on which our mutual co-operation in the Commonwealth and in the World is the bond of development.

We in Malaysia are proud, if I may say so, justly proud of the progress made in our Development since Independence fourteen years ago. But we realise only too well that inspite of the progress we have achieved, there is still much to be done before we can meet the aspirations and expectations of our people to lead a modern life in a fast moving and advancing world.

Your Excellencies, in the field of development, we here realise that we cannot achieve the result or accomplishments in isolation but that in carrying out our national development, we must work in co-operation with other countries which are experiencing the same problems as we have and who are likewise still in the development process.

For this reason, my Government, some five years ago, established the Malaysian Centre for Development Studies. This institution is intended to provide a forum for dialogue and discussion between development implementors among developing nations so that we will all be able to exchange ideas on development planning and, in particular, development implementation technique and thereby we hope will mutually benefit therefrom.

I am happy to say that there has been welcome response from friendly countries in Africa and Asia to take part in seminars and discussions that have been organised for mutual benefit of all of us. Many representatives of Governments of Africa have come all the way to attend these seminars and forums and have made very worthwhile contributions in terms of making available their reservoir of practical experience.

I believe, Your Excellencies, that we who are not only politicians but also men of practical vision fully understand that we must give

practical effect to the development planning in our country so that our people can see in practical terms the results of our efforts to meet their wishes and their rising expectations. I am sure you will agree with me that if we don't put policy statements and recommendations into effect, our pronouncements will merely remain as examples of eloquent oratory only to be dissipated with the winds of time.

Therefore, yours and our willingness to meet on the practical problems of development show ample proof on our part that we are serious in our determination to benefit our respective peoples economically and socially.

Your Excellencies, although your countries are many thousands of miles away from ours, we have many things in common. We face the same problems as all developing countries do, problems of endeavouring to effect greater economic growth; of giving our people better and higher standard of living; of finding our rightful place among the comity of nations. It is, therefore of the greatest benefit to all of us if we, developing nations, can work together, sharing common experience and endeavouring to co-operate closely in resolving common problems.

It is, therefore, in this context that I greatly welcome your visit to our country—short though it may be—but I do hope that you all can find an opportunity again to visit us, perhaps stay a bit longer and see other parts of our country and meet our people in their homes and in their work.

Your Excellencies, we in Malaysia are greatly honoured by your presence and that of your good ladies here in our country. I hope during your short visit here you would realise that our people of various racial origins have the utmost feeling of goodwill and friendship to the people whom you represent.

I, therefore, trust, that you will carry back with you our goodwill and good wishes and our hope that the bond of friendship and co-operation with your respective countries—strengthened as a result of your visit—will be further strengthened in the years to come.

We have here present, as our honoured guests, the President of Gambia, the President of the Republic of Botswana; the Prime

Minister of Malta, Prime Minister of Barbados, Prime Minister of Mauritius, Prime Minister of Western Samoa, Prime Minister of Fiji and the representative of the Nigerian Government.

I would like to ask you all to rise and join with me in the toast to the Heads of States, the Governments and the peoples of the countries represented here.