

**UCAPAN PERDANA MENTERI, DI MAJLIS
JAMUAN MAKAN MALAM GABUNGAN
DEWAN-DEWAN PERNIAGAAN KEBANG-
SAAN DI LAKE CLUB, KUALA LUMPUR
PADA 3HB NOVEMBER, 1973**

Encik Choong Han Leong, J.P., Pengerusi Gabungan Dewan-dewan Perniagaan Kebangsaan; Dif-dif Terhormat, Tuan-tuan dan Puan-puan,

Terlebih dahulu, sukalah saya menyatakan perasaan terimakasih di atas jemputan menghadiri Majlis Jamuan Makan Malam yang permai ini.

Sungguhpun majlis ini diadakan setiap tahun, bagi saya inilah peluang yang keemasan untuk bertemu muka dan beramah mesra dengan tuan-tuan yang mewakili golongan peniaga seluruh negara ini serta mempelajari sedikit sebanyak pengalaman dan masaalah-masaalah yang tuan-tuan hadapi sehari-hari.

Dari air muka para hadirin yang berseri-seri sekitar Dewan ini, saya dapat meramalkan bahawa tahun ini adalah tahun yang membawa bahagia dan kemakmuran kepada kaum peniaga amnya, baik yang di bandar-bandar besar maupun yang di pekan-pekan kecil dan di kampung-kampung. Kita semua berharap keadaan ekonomi yang segar ini akan terus berkekalan untuk beberapa lama lagi supaya kita dapat mengatasi tekanan inflasi yang berlaku sekarang, yang mana Kerajaan sedang mengambil tindakan-tindakan positif bagi mengatasinya.

Saya suka juga mengambil kesempatan ini mengucapkan tahniah kepada Encik Choong Han Leong, J.P. atas perlantikannya sebagai Pengerusi baru National Chambers ini. Sambil itu juga saya mengucapkan pujian dan terimakasih kepada Y.B.M. Tengku Tan Sri Razaleigh atas kerjasama dan nasihat yang diberikannya kepada Kerajaan semasa beliau memimpin Gabungan ini setahun lalu.

Saya yakin hubungan yang erat antara National Chambers dan Kerajaan akan berkekalan di bawah pimpinan yang baru itu dan

seterusnya berharap Gabungan ini akan mencapai kejayaan yang cemerlang dalam segala usahanya.

Tuan Pengerusi, Tuan-tuan sekalian,

This is indeed a happy occasion for me and I think for all of us here. Coming soon after the Hari Raya festivities, this gathering enables us to continue the Hari Raya spirit and on top of that to be treated to a sumptuous dinner. I would like once again to thank the Organising Committee, for their kind invitation this evening. I always look forward to this opportunity to meet members of the business community—big and small alike—who are represented in the constituent bodies of the National Chambers of Commerce.

I am happy to say that the Government has always maintained close and cordial relations with your organisation. I am also personally indebted to your outgoing Chairman, Tengku Tan Sri Razaleigh, for his valuable advice and co-operation and I am sure I could expect similar response from your new Chairman, Mr Choong. In this way, both our mutual interests and the paramount interest of our people will always be maintained. This will certainly augur well for our country.

Tuan-tuan sekalian,

I am told that you spent a considerable part of this afternoon reviewing our economic performance, making an appraisal of the Malaysian economy and its future prospects. It is indeed heartening to know that we have been doing well in many respects and the continuing good prices obtainable for our export commodities have enabled us to enjoy a sizeable trade surplus for the first half of the year. This is in spite of the higher prices we have to pay for imported goods during the same period.

The picture is equally encouraging when we look at the industrial statistics where the industrial production index up to June this year continued to move upwards to 146.9. This is the highest quarterly index recorded so far for any single quarter since 1968. Taking specifically the case of manufacturing index, this has moved from 172.1 in the first quarter of 1973 to 183.1 in the second quarter i.e. an increase of 11 points. All these indicate, as you rightly said just now, Mr Chairman, to the growing strength and stability of our economy.

Tuan-tuan sekalian.

However interesting and encouraging the statistic may be, what is of real concern to the Government right now is the well-being of our people in the face of the current inflation, inflationary trends in the country. The Government is doing all it can and intensifying its efforts to check the increases in prices. In this connection I would like to direct my call to you as members of the respective Chambers of Commerce to help in every way possible. We must see to it that locally manufactured goods particularly food and other essential items should be made available to the public at reasonable prices. The same goes for locally assembled items such as cars, radio and television which have become part and parcel of our daily lives.

I look back with pleasure to the meeting I had recently with representatives of the Chambers, Manufacturers and Trade Unions and gladly note that the proposal for relief allowances which we had decided to introduce in respect of the lower paid staff as well as other measures for the benefit of the general public is well received by all concerned. I hope that employers in the private sector will go some way to meet the request for similar relief allowances by their workers.

However, I would like to re-emphasise the importance of the second-prong measures which I hope will find widespread response from individuals as well as organisations. It should be appreciated that Government will be disbursing a substantial amount of book assistance to school pupils and greater attention will be given to assist the lower income group in obtaining cheap and nutritious meals at Government and factory canteens. This, together with intensive grow more food campaign for self-sufficiency in food-stuff should be really effective in curbing inflation and its side effects.

I did state some time ago that the Government will be opening up a new area for padi cultivation in the Trans-Perak Scheme with an area of about 20,000 acres while additional areas are being earmarked for maize and tapioca. Besides, new padi areas are being investigated in Pahang and Trengganu which, if found suitable, will contribute to meet our target of self-sufficiency in rice over the next few years. It is also hoped to develop areas in

Sabah and Sarawak so that the two States would be, as far as possible, self-supporting in rice.

Tuan-tuan sekalian.

There is, I believe, another matter in which you are all very interested, that is, the Mid-Term Review of our Second Malaysia Plan. Unfortunately, I cannot say very much about this now since it has first to be presented before Parliament. It may, however, please you to know that, looking at the GNP growth rate, we have indeed done well for ourselves: in fact, in some cases, very well indeed—thanks to the continued support and confidence of the people in the Government. The future is bright and so long as everyone does his part, we will be able to achieve our objective of a prosperous, and peaceful and united Malaysia.

I need not over-emphasise how vital it is for us to succeed in our efforts to combat this inflationary situation. Otherwise, should it be allowed to deteriorate further, it would certainly jeopardise our efforts to correct the economic imbalance as well as eradicate poverty and the long-term goal of restructuring and establishing a just and stable society for our people.

Once again, Mr Chairman, I thank you for giving me the opportunity of meeting you and your colleagues at this pleasant and enjoyable gathering to-night. I am sure with the spirit of understanding and cooperation between the Government and the National Chambers as well as among members of your constituent bodies we will together ensure and greater rate of economic progress and development of Malaysia in the years ahead.

Terima kasih dan selamat maju jaya.