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ADDRESS BY THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
TO COUNCIL OF FOREIGN AND
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS OF THAILAND
IN BANGKOK ON 1ST AUGUST, 1966.

Your Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen;

I am indeed happy and honoured to have been given this opportunity today to address you, the Council of Foreign and International Affairs of Thailand. In this proud and beautiful city of Bangkok at this crucial stage in the development of our region of South East Asia.

As I speak to you today, the eyes of the world are watching us. They are watching, with keen and critical eyes, the efforts of our three countries, Thailand, the Philippines and Malaysia. They are all watching - friend and foe alike - and they ask themselves: Can these three countries in a corner of Asia work together to bring about peace and happiness and the good life for the millions in their peoples in their region?

Our answer is this: Here in Bangkok the world is witness to a real beginning. We, the representatives of the Kingdom of Thailand, the Republic of the Philippines and of Malaysia, met here to take counsel together, to draw plans of our activities and to agree on the mode of implementation.

It was five years ago, on the 31st of July 1961, to be precise, that our three countries decided here in Bangkok to launch the Association of Southeast Asian States, or ASA, as it is popularly known.

We came together and pledged our three countries in the Bangkok Declaration to work together in the social, cultural, economic, technical, research and development fields.

We came together strongly convinced that our three sovereign,

independent countries must pull together in order to create by our own efforts the beginnings of a firm basis for regional stability, well-being and prosperity.

But we realized, of course, that we would first have to give a practical demonstration that regional cooperation can succeed among our three countries; that unselfish, mutual help is really enlightened self-interest in our shrinking world.

We were convinced - as we still are - that effective regional cooperation in economic, social and cultural matters would serve as a stimulus to more rapid economic development in each country; enhance the well-being of its people; and promote a spirit of good neighbourliness which would siphon off potential disputes and disagreements among the three countries.

Despite the intra-regional difficulties and disputes that have occurred during the past five years, the Association of Southeast Asia did not perish. On the contrary, the temporary differences between the Philippines and Malaysia, and Malaysia's pre-occupation with her defence against confrontation, could not succeed in extinguishing the ASA concept.

In Bangkok, in Manila and in Kuala Lumpur, the flame was kept alive throughout this dark period, since the three countries were aware that it would not be long before the Association was reactivated.

Normalisation of relations between the Republic of the Philippines and Malaysia and the growing approachment between Indonesia and Malaysia have brought about a tremendous improvement in the political climate in our region. The stability and security of the southern part of Southeast Asia have shown a marked improvement.

The collapse of the Indonesian communist attempt at a *coup d'etat* and the nation-wide revulsion against the largest communist movement in the non-communist world have set in motion a powerful resurgence of constructive nationalism in Indonesia. I believe that, whatever difficulties or obstacles we may encounter in future, a new era of friendly relations between Indonesia and Malaysia has already begun.

In the meantime, the ASA Standing Committee met in Bangkok on the 2nd of March this year. The Standing Committee Meeting was a prelude to the Meeting of the Joint Working Party in Kuala Lumpur on April 27. No fewer than 41 specific recommendations were made at the Meeting - recommendations which, when implemented, are likely to prove of far-reaching benefit to our three countries.

This was followed up by another Special Meeting of the Joint Working Party last week, this time in Bangkok. At this Special Meeting, final agreement was reached on all the recommended projects.

The stage is now set for immediate and practical implementation of these projects. ASA is about to translate itself into the realm of practical and purposeful cooperation in a wide variety of common projects.

For the first time in history, independent Southeast Asian countries have not only come together but have come together in mutual, practical cooperation. For the first time, regional cooperation is becoming a practical reality which we expect will soon begin to yield concrete results.

As envisaged by the Bangkok Declaration of July 31st, 1961, the three countries are now entering into an era of fruitful collaboration in the utilisation of our respective natural resources, the development of our agriculture and industry, the expansion of our trade, the improvement of our transport and communication facilities and, in general, raising the living standards of our three peoples.

As I said on a previous occasion, now is the time not merely for talk and words, but for positive action and for tangible results.

Ours is a practical approach with a difference. It is pragmatic but not an aimless series of *ad hoc* measures to cope with isolated socio-economic problems as they arise. Such an approach would be doomed from the outset. We are, shall I say, construction engineers with a modern, overall plan.

Our practical approach is imbued with a vision and a faith.

We know where we are going, since we understand our overriding objective.

That objective can only be the fruition of the mounting hopes implanted in the hearts of the people throughout Southeast Asia.

Rapid economic growth consistent with the enduring elements in our traditional cultures; social stability, both national and regional, which is largely the product of strongly-based, enlightened government; and that peace which has proved so elusive in the past.

We, the representatives of Thailand, the Philippines and Malaysia has come together in Bangkok, deeply conscious of the awesome responsibilities we owe to our peoples. Their rising hopes, their deep-seated yearning for lasting peace and prosperity can and must be met.

This is the real revolution in Southeast Asia today. It is a revolution of rising expectations of all our peoples for a better life, for peace and stability.

Ours is a region of tremendous human and material potential. To harness, to tap these vast resources requires a collective will, a common determination to gear our respective national development plans to a broadly-based regional effort.

We, the members of the Association of Southeast Asian States are well aware of the magnitude of the task confronting us. We have no illusions about the difficulties we are likely to encounter in our joint efforts to forge an enduring and durable regional body.

Above all, we shall need a time of peace and stability in order to plan, to prepare and to build. All our plans will be delayed or disrupted if we do not have a time of peace in Southeast Asia.

We look for peace — we see war in Vietnam. We look for stability — we see a new growth of communist insurgency in Northeast Thailand, in the Philippines and in our own country Malaysia, where the communists in Sarawak have been trying to establish a Yenan in the heart of Southeast Asia.

While we ponder and plan the measures we believe will set our

three countries firmly on the road to an increasingly happy and prosperous future, we cannot forget the long, bloody conflict in Vietnam.

We cannot forget that unhappy, war-torn country has hardly had any respite from violence and bloodshed during the past 20 years, ever since the end of World War II.

We naturally view with anxiety the possibility of a direct military confrontation between the major Powers over the Vietnam conflict. We are naturally concerned over the risk of widening hostilities.

Yet, we are in conscience bound to call a spade a spade. The conflict in Vietnam has resulted fundamentally from North Vietnam's interference and aggression against South Vietnam. That cannot be denied.

In fact, North Vietnam has made it abundantly clear that its official policy is to re-unite Vietnam under a communist regime, through (the use of force).

Until the leaders of North Vietnam are convinced that there cannot be a military solution to the Vietnam conflict, until they are convinced that there has to be a peaceful, political settlement, the agony of the Vietnamese people will continue.

Malaysia, therefore, supports every effort, every initiative aimed at bringing the combatants to the conference table. Malaysia supports every attempt to settle the conflict by peaceful negotiation.

Malaysia upholds the principle that a peaceful solution must be based on respect for the spirit of the Geneva Agreement of 1954. Malaysia upholds the principle that the integrity and independence of the Republic of Vietnam must be sustained and guaranteed, and that the people of South Vietnam should be free to choose for themselves their own way of life and their own system of government free from outside interference, aggression and subversion.

In short, Malaysia is convinced that every nation, every Government in Southeast Asia, must accept the principle of coexistence in international relations and of respect for the territorial integrity and political independence of others.

One of the most serious dangers flowing from the deliberate rejection of the principle of international coexistence is that Vietnam and Southeast Asia might be drawn into the vortex of a Great Power conflict. The longer the fighting lasts in Vietnam, the greater this threat might become. The threat can be removed only by a genuine, peaceful settlement of the current conflict.

It is in the interest of every country in South-East Asia to get on with the task of regional cooperation in the economic, social and cultural spheres. But we can only succeed in the task of national and regional construction if our region is not divided by subversion, aggression and interference, which is the cause, not the effect, of countries in this region seeking defence assistance from friendly outside powers. Remove the cause and there would be no need for threatened countries seeking such outside assistance, at least not in such large measure.

We in Malaysia understand the true meaning of militant, aggressive communism. For 12 years we bore the main brunt of the communist assault in our part of this region.

The world knows very well the sufferings of my people during the Malayan Emergency. The civilians killed by terrorists far outnumbered the total casualties suffered by the security forces.

Our nation was born in suffering and strife. That is why we share with our neighbours who are victims of infiltration, subversion and aggression, a common bond of suffering and of struggle against the common threat to our very existence as independent countries.

Let us remind those who do not see the wood for the trees that the simultaneous growth of subversion and terrorism in Northeast Thailand, Central Luzon and Sarawak is no coincidence.

Nor is it mere coincidence that the day after His Excellency President Marcos of the Philippines ordered the replacement of regular troops in Luzon with engineer units that the communist *hukbalahaps* launched a vicious armed attack in the rural areas of Luzon.

The Army engineers were to be engaged in civic actions projects

aimed at improving the economic life of the rural people. Since communism thrives on poverty and agrarian discontent, it will go to any lengths to sabotage President Marcos' plans to expand peaceful construction and development.

During the Tripartite Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Manila in 1963, I read an address at an open session of the Meeting.

The theme of my address was the elimination of the twin evils, poverty and militant communism, from my country: I stressed that defence and development are complementary tasks for any country and suggested that the lessons learned in our nation-building are relevant to other emerging nations in Southeast Asia.

In my address I pointed out that we have learned these lessons the hard way, the way of bitter experience.

I personally have had no reason to change my views on this subject. On the contrary, subsequent experience has served only to strengthen my conviction that neither national survival nor international cooperation in our part of the world is possible unless we carry out a sustained two-pronged attack on the forces ranged against us.

The experience of our big neighbour, Indonesia, is a case in point. The new responsible leaders of Indonesia have placed the blame on the adventurist regime of the former Foreign Minister, Dr. Subandrio, backed by the Party Communists Indonesia, for their wasteful policies and for causing such heavy drain on the Indonesia economy. The new Indonesian leaders, fired by the zeal and dedication of a resurgent, constructive nationalism, have called for an end to all these destructive and negative policies and are now embarked on a policy of peaceful relations with the outside world, followed by peaceful reconstruction of their great country.

We must have peace in our region in order to win our struggle for a rising standard of social and economic justice for our people. But we must realise that our efforts will not go unchallenged and we must be prepared to struggle for our right to have peace and progress. It would be idle to pretend that the militant communism which directs and coordinated the communist offensives in Thailand, the Philippines and Malaysia, regards the reactivation of ASA with

equanimity. On the contrary, the communist programme of subversion, and terrorism is likely to be intensified. We must, therefore, be prepared to meet these forces against us and if we succeed, as I am sure we will, we shall have given ourselves, our region and the world an outstanding example. We shall have proved to ourselves and to the world that our concept of progressive self-reliance in mutual cooperation is immeasurably superior to the militant communist policy of aggression which is, in fact, the part to self-isolation and international chaos. We are not against communist or the communist system of Government so long as that system is confined to the borders of that particular country. We are against any attempt to interfere with the independence and sovereignty of another country. We, the countries in this region of South-East Asia, only want to live our own way of life in peace, freedom and progress without any interference from outside. We want to be left along to manage our own affairs in the way we think right and proper.

The world-wide trend towards cooperation and interdependence among nations and peoples is growing apace. This world-wide trend has crystallized in the United Nations itself, where Peace and International Cooperation have been set up as ideals towards which humanity should increasingly strive.

It is accompanied by the growing conviction that international cooperation must not be allowed to dwell in the clouds of abstract idealism. It must be brought down to earth. It must be translated into practical concrete terms.

As Dr. Alberto Lleras Camargo, the distinguished Colombian statesman, diplomat and author has put it:

"In the cultural field, regional action is absolutely indispensable and the only possible road to world unity. The same is true in the economic field where, it is obvious, international cooperation must be directed towards specific, geographically localized problems rather than universal and abstract goals. This fact was so obvious that one of the first steps of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) was to set up regional commissions, which, in the case of the Western Hemispheres, to some extent duplicate the pre-existing regional body".

Regional cooperation is no less important for Southeast Asia

than it is for Africa or Western Europe or Latin America. Indeed, the sense of urgency in Southeast Asia is much more acute than elsewhere, since our region has become the focal-point of an incipient Great Power struggle.-

For us the stakes are high indeed. They involve our very existence as free nations and peoples of Southeast Asia.

We must make an honest, determined start now. We, the nations of the Association of Southeast Asia have a purpose and we have a plan.

We are fully conscious of the heavy responsibilities that destiny has trust upon us. And we are fully determined to accept them, by hard, unremitting work sustained by our inflexible faith in our positive, peaceful ideals.

I myself am convinced that when we succeed in transforming ASA into a living, potent reality, our example will play a decisive role in forging a new era of peace, progress and mutual trust in Southeast Asia.

In the name of our common humanity, in the name of peace and goodwill towards all men and nations, we call upon all powers, both great and small, to show respect towards the aspirations of the peoples of our region.

We want only peace and friendship. We want to sustain our distinctive ways of life in freedom and prosperity without interference.

History is on the side of our objectives. Regimes that ignore this fact do so at their own peril. They should learn to coexist and to cooperate with us. For history is indeed on our side, on the side of humanity.