

SPEECH BY THE HON'BLE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
AT THE OPENING OF THE MALAYSIAN YOUTH COUNCIL
SEMINAR ON 20TH JANUARY 1967

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am happy and honoured to be invited to open your Seminar this evening. I am also happy to note that there seems to be an ever-growing awareness among the youths of this country and, in particular, among the Members of the Majlis Belia Malaysia, of the need for better youth leadership in this country. Malaysia is a young nation and more than half of our population consists of youths. Therefore, the accent is all Government policies and activities must be on the youths.

The Malaysian Youth Council, in its role as the co-ordinating body of your organizations and as the National Committee of the World Assembly of Youth in Malaysia, has a definite responsibility not only to give that dynamic and creative leadership among the youths of this country but to help to train our youths so that they will be able to give more effective and useful leadership in all fields of activities.

Your Council has now entered the third year of its existence and I do hope that during the last three years you have been able to bring greater unity among youth movements in this country. I hope that besides carrying out your role as the co-ordinating body of youth organisation, I would like your Council to do everything possible to encourage and promote more multi-racial and multi-religious youth organisations in this country. I would also like to see more and more Malaysian youth clubs and organizations rather than youth clubs confined to a particular community.

I understand the Seminar which you are organising now has the object of bringing together youth organizations of different interests, social levels and even tendencies so that an appropriate study can be made about the problems facing the various youth organisations. It is hope that as the result of this Seminar, the MYC will be able to carry out its task more effectively. I also hope that it will lead to greater understanding and unity of purpose in tackling the problems facing our youths today, and that the MYC would make greater efforts to get all the youth organizations in this country to be its affiliates. It is only by getting the great majority of the youth organizations under its wing that the MYC could really be able to carry its task efficiently and

effectively. If the MYC is really representative of all the youth organizations, then it will be easier for Government to channel whatever assistance Government may wish to give through the MYC as the co-ordinating body for all youth organizations.

Since we achieved independence almost ten years ago, our country has moved forward in all fields, particularly, in the field of development. Our Government has been able to bring about changes in the towns and the villages and indeed, as has often been said, during the last ten years there has been a silent revolution throughout the country. The Government has been able to bring to our people greater and better amenities of life and generally, our people enjoy better and higher standards of living than they did under colonial rule. In other words, with freedom and political democracy, we are able to carry out economic democracy, that is to say, we have been able to allow our available economic resources to be shared more equally and justly among all sections of our people. In this task of economic development, the youths in this country have an important role to play. I have always said that the greatest resources that we have in our country is the human resources. In order to achieve greater economic growth and progress we must tap the human resources and must bring up into the surface those latent qualities that exist in the hearts and minds of our people. We must make our people realize that vast opportunities for progress are open to them provided they are prepared to make sacrifices to work harder. This pioneering spirit and the will to work are there in the hearts and minds of our people and it is our duty to promote and encourage the spread of this spirit and the will to work for one's own betterment. Afterall, the progress has been achieved - the tall buildings around us, the beautiful towns and cities in our country have been built through the sweat and toil of our forefathers. It is for us all to continue to build on the progress that has so far been achieved so that we and our children will enjoy a better and higher standard of living.

Everyday we see changes around us. We see concrete examples of development and of progress affecting the lives of our people. The youths of this country must herefore be prepared to accept responsibilities to carry on and enhance the progress that has so far been achieved. Our youth leaders and organization must provide a wider base of responsible leadership for the growing masses of our people who are freeing themselves from the traditional way of life and social structure and values; and are slowly changing their attitudes as they become conscious of the great competition as they come to face with the changes of the modern world. Our schools provide our youths with education. Education can only give one a start in life but to be able to play our full part in the life of our country, we must inculcate a

sense of responsibility, civic consciousness and patriotism which must also be developed outside the school system.

Our youth movements will have to change to promote concrete and responsible leadership. Programmes of youth activities must be so organized as to help discover the problems faced in way of personal and community development. Small study groups should be organized which can examine such pressing questions as savings, higher education, housing, unemployment, leisure and even marriages. This type of programme for youths will help them to face the realities of life in order that they will become responsible leaders of the community. Indeed, we have to channel the energies of our youths for the solution of the problems that faced us today. In evolving a really effective training programme, the MYC could play a prominent role by bringing together experience leaders of youth movements. Methods and techniques used by youth movements seem sometimes to be unimportant and that they are submerged by larger and more complicated problems of economic and social development. Yet these larger problems depend essentially on the work of these educative movements. The efforts of present leadership in our developing country must be reinforced by an ever-increasing number of responsible leadership at all levels and in all fields and in all efforts of Government so that we can achieve better results and greater success.

The first steps of a baby are heralded with joy because he has started his long road to an autonomous and free personality. The first steps of leadership are to be seen with the same eye. The secretary of a small working group may today be taking down minutes, but it leads him a few steps away from illiteracy and prepares him to become the secretary of a co-operative, a trade union or later even that of a political party. The parliamentary procedure of a discussion group prepares young people to participate effectively in the working of democracy.

This is the road that MYC must plod in the sixties. It must make youth movements into the reservoir of leaderships waiting to be tapped. This is MYC's great task during the remaining years of this decade and in the seventies. So much for MYC's task. Now I would like to talk about the role of youth in nation-building and what the Government is doing for the young people of this country.

We are a young nation striving to build up a common loyalty and national consciousness. Through our national education system, where our children are learning the same thing in the same way and in some cases under the same roof, it is hoped that our children will grow as useful and loyal citizens of our country. Although we have made great efforts and achieved much progress in the nation-building

since merdeka, there is still much to be done. We must continue to consolidate the foundation which have already been laid in the education system for the integration of the various races and for the creation of a united Malaysian nation.

The Government is alive to the problems facing our youth today. That is why the Government has created the Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sports. It is the policy of the Government to assist in providing facilities for youth in the various parts of the country so that they will have greater opportunities to carry out their various activities in order to make them useful members of the society. Also, the Government is fully aware of the problem of unemployment among the youth in the various parts of the country and the government has started a National Youth Pioneer Corps which will enable these youths to be given practical training and experience so that they can be absorbed into useful employment. Besides, the Government has embarked on the training of youth by other Government agencies, such as MARA and the Central Apprenticeship Board so that necessary training can be given to our youth to fit them for employment in various fields of commerce and industry. Indeed our youth are being given whatever training necessary to become disciplined skilled and semi-skilled workers. It is to objective that they should be imbued with the pioneer spirit of endeavour and hard work and also a sense of belonging to the country and a sense of loyalty and patriotism. It is in our youth that we must inculcate the harmony and goodwill in our desire to build a strong and united nation and all our hopes of the future depend on our youth - the success of our efforts in building a progressive and happy Malaysia depends on the aspiration, enthusiasm and vigour of our youth of today.

I have much pleasure in declaring the Seminar open.