

**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, AT THE
OPENING OF THE CONFERENCE ON ROAD
ENGINEERING IN ASIA AND AUSTRALIA, AT
FEDERAL HOTEL, KUALA LUMPUR ON 10TH
JUNE, 1973**

Mr Chairman, Honourable Ministers, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am extremely happy to be here this morning to address you all at the Opening Session of the Conference on Road Engineering in Asia and Australasia.

I would like to extend a special welcome to the delegates from overseas and hope your stay in Kuala Lumpur will be both pleasant and memorable.

From what I can see, the large number of delegates participating in this Conference, as well as their calibre and standing in the profession, is indeed very heartening and encouraging, not only to Malaysia but to the whole Conference region. This augurs well for the engineering profession and somewhat endorses the view that good sound engineering has no physical boundaries or limitations.

This is the first time a Conference on Road Engineering in Asia and Australasia is held and we are very happy to be hosts for this first meeting. I wish to congratulate the Organising Committee, whose members are not only from the Institution of Engineers Malaysia and the Public Works Department Malaysia, but also from the Department of Highways, Thailand. Thus this Conference can be said to be the result of joint efforts of the engineers of Thailand and Malaysia working in close co-ordination with one another. This is yet another instance of regional co-operation in reality which the recent opening of the new bridge across Sungai Golok jointly performed by the Prime Minister of Thailand and myself bears excellent testimony.

It is most timely and appropriate that this Conference is being held in Kuala Lumpur as we in Malaysia are in the midst of implementing our Second Malaysia Plan. You would agree with me that in any development plan, the inclusion of transport and communications is of utmost importance since they are vital to the

social and economic development. Effective transport and communications provide accessibility to new development areas, improve the integration of the various parts of the country, facilitate better public administration and ensure the safeguarding of the security of the nation.

Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In Peninsular Malaysia, the basic systems of transport and communications are generally well established. However, existing facilities are being expanded and improved to meet the growing demands generated by the development of the various sectors of the economy and by population growth. In Sabah and Sarawak, the transport and communications network is relatively less developed and less widespread, but further expansion of this network and improvements to existing facilities are also being undertaken. It is a significant fact that the road network in both states has increased many-folds since their independence through Malaysia ten years ago.

Within the framework of development in transport and communications is the inclusion of a massive plan for road development in order to provide an adequate and efficient road network to serve the needs of the country not only economically but socially. To accomplish these objectives, the expenditure for road development is directed, firstly, towards the construction of new roads that provide access to areas where land is being developed, people settled and new industries established.

Vast expenditure is also spent on the improvement of the major road network, especially roads that connect major production areas to ports, and sources of raw material supplies. This improvement will result in better road geometrics and increased strength of road pavement, leading to more efficient, faster and safer travelling.

By the end of the decade, road development plan in Peninsular Malaysia alone will increase the existing road mileage of 10,832 miles by 1,075 miles, of which about 440 miles will be trunk roads. Thus this road construction programme could well be the venue for utilization of some of the revelation and findings of this Conference.

To achieve this, our road engineers will have to maximise their endeavours to make use of the various technical innovations. These

may be in the form of greater use of computer and other sophisticated equipment or even simple form of road surfacing, proven and used extensively elsewhere and which can be adapted for use in this country, perhaps with modifications. Whatever these innovations may be, provided their use would be advantageous, then no efforts should be spared in experimenting them initially and if proved successful, their usage should be adopted. With this progressive outlook amongst the engineers, I look forward to more sophisticated engineering in our road construction programme.

Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I hope during the course of this Conference there will be ample opportunities for you all to exchange knowledge and experience on road engineering practice, especially on improved technique and methodology, which will not only result in higher quality roads to be built but built at a reduced cost. This will be most beneficial not only to Malaysia and other developing countries in this region but to all developed countries as well, particularly so in these days of rising costs in construction.

I also note that the topics of the papers to be presented cover, apart from road engineering, that of airfields and works allied to roads. This indeed is a good concept as no single discipline in engineering should be treated in isolation. It is important that the range of subject matter to be discussed is comprehensive, covering planning, design, construction and maintenance activities of road engineering.

Furthermore, looking at the selection of the subjects for discussion during the next few days, it is apparent that great emphasis has been placed on pavement and surfacing. This is most logical as it is these parts of the road structure that have the greatest impact on road users, who normally judge you by the quality of the road surface. A good road surface providing smooth and comfortable travelling brings forth praise whereas one full of potholes results not only in the jolting of the bones but also in criticism of road engineers.

As a road user, I find the inclusion of subjects like highways and traffic safety most reassuring. This feeling, I am sure, must be shared by all road engineers as they are not only conscious of their responsibility to the travelling public but they too must at

some time or other, travel on the very roads they built. Thus building "safe roads" must be your motto.

At this stage, a note of caution to the engineers is called for. I happen to notice from the programme that one of the joint-authors of a paper on road safety is a member of the medical profession. Apparently, the engineering profession has been invaded!

There is an intriguing paper amongst the many submitted for discussion namely "The Effect of Maturity on the Strength and Durability of Sugar treated Soil Cement". This perhaps might lead to greater use of sugar resulting in cheaper roads but I hope in propounding its use, you, Distinguished Delegates, would not cause a scarcity of this commodity in the world market, thus escalating the price of sugar.

I am pleased to note that papers including the use of rubber will be presented for discussion in this Conference. I trust the Conference would explore exhaustively and successfully for the greater and more economical use of this commodity in road works. This is particularly important for us in Malaysia being the biggest producer of natural rubber and also to Indonesia and Thailand.

The Organising Committee is also sponsoring students to visit the Exhibition and holding an Essay Competition which include participation by Secondary School students. This will undoubtedly arouse greater interest in the younger generation not only on road engineering but perhaps other engineering discipline. The Organising Committee certainly believes in catching them young. Whilst applauding their efforts, I wish to emphasis that it is perhaps more important to sustain this interest and there is no better way in doing this than for engineers to practice engineering in the best tradition of the profession. This can best be done by continuous exchanges of ideas and experiences among members of your profession as exemplified by this Conference.

With these words, Ladies and Gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure to declare the Conference open and wish you success in your deliberations.