

SPEECH BY THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
TO THE THIRD FOREIGN MINISTERS'
CONFERENCE OF A.S.A. COUNTRIES IN
BANGKOK ON THE 3RD AUGUST, 1966.

Mr. Chairman, Your Excellency the Prime Minister, Your Excellencies Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I would like on behalf of the Delegation from Malaysia to express our very sincere gratitude to His Excellency the Prime Minister for having spared the time to be with us this morning and to give us such an inspiring address. I have no doubt, Mr. Prime Minister, that your words of wisdom will give that added stimulus and encouragement to all of us here to make A.S.A.: a living reality.

Mr. Chairman, I would like on behalf of my Delegation to express also our appreciation for the warm reception and hospitality extended to us by the Government and the people of Thailand. We, from Malaysia, have already been accustomed to this traditional Thai hospitality and all of us from Malaysia are no strangers to this beautiful city of Bangkok. To you, Mr. Chairman, and your colleagues, we are all looking forward not only to a most pleasant and enjoyable stay, but also to the opportunity of meeting old friends.

Mr. Chairman, allow me to express my sincere congratulations to you on your election as Chairman of this meeting. Together with my Prime Minister, you are one of the architects of A.S.A. and I can think of no one more suited to take the chair of this important meeting than yourself. I am confident that under your able and wise guidance, this meeting is assured of success.

I would also like, Mr. Chairman, to convey to you, and to His Excellency the Prime Minister and to our colleague, the Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Philippines, the sincere regret of my Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, for being unable to be with us today. Our Prime Minister had originally intended to be present here personally but, owing to unavoidable circumstances, he is

unable to be away from Kuala Lumpur. He has therefore asked me to convey his apologies.

Mr. Chairman, it was in this capital city of Bangkok five years ago that A.S.A. was first launched. Today, after a period of three years of almost complete inactivity, Foreign Ministers of A.S.A. countries are gathered here again to revive and to reactivate A.S.A. Despite the temporary set-back, I am pleased to see that our belief and conviction in the ideals, which inspired our 3 countries to form A.S.A., have not in any way diminished. On the contrary, all the leaders of our 3 countries are more convinced than ever of the compelling need and urgency to strengthen A.S.A.; to strengthen the concept of goodwill, friendship and cooperation among our 3 countries for peace, stability and progress, not only of our respective countries and people, but of this region of South-East Asia.

Mr. Chairman, our meeting here today is of great significance. The eyes of the world are now focussed on this region of Asia and are focussed on us today to see whether this, our concept of regional cooperation, will have any meaning and will become a reality. We have, therefore, a duty not only to our people and our respective countries, but also to the freedom-loving and peace-loving countries of the world to demonstrate clearly that A.S.A. is a reality and that we here are determined that the activities of A.S.A. will grow and expand and will give tangible results for all our people to see. We have also a duty to show to our neighbours and the world that A.S.A. is not directed against any Nation or any ideology. As I said in the Meeting of the Joint-Working Committee of A.S.A. in Kuala Lumpur last April, A.S.A. is not a power bloc. A.S.A. stands for a common desire to strengthen goodwill, understanding and friendship among our people. A.S.A. is an attempt to form a peaceful bloc, powerful in goodwill, powerful in mutual understanding and in determination to enhance the welfare of our people. We are not against anyone, we are pro-ourselves, we are pro-peace, stability and progress of our region.

Mr. Chairman, five years ago, we have declared in clear terms the ideals and the spirit behind A.S.A. in the Bangkok Declaration. The ideals and the spirit of A.S.A. mean one thing, and one thing only, and that is, we, the 3 countries in A.S.A., are determined to work together; to progress and develop together, both economical-

ly and culturally, to ensure that our people, the Thais, the Filipinos and the Malaysians, will have a better way of life and a happier and fuller life so that we can take our rightful place as freedom-loving people and as citizens of free sovereign Nations. It is now the duty of all of us to turn these ideals into actions, into concrete proposals and projects. It is our duty to turn our words into deeds, to show that A.S.A. does have a real meaning, a real place in the hearts and the minds of our people.

Mr. Chairman, this region of South-East Asia is one of the world's richest areas in terms of natural resources and economic potential. Through our own efforts, with a dynamic approach and imaginative planning and with determined efforts to implement plans into action, we can husband these resources and give our people that happiness and prosperity that they so much desire. Since the reactivation of A.S.A. with the meeting of the Standing Committee on March 2nd, 1966 after a lapse of three years, events for A.S.A. have been moving fast indeed. The Standing Committee have met three times and the Third Meeting of the Joint Working Party was held in Kuala Lumpur on April 27th this year. Our representatives at the Joint Working Party have put in a lot of hard work. They have produced no less than forty-one constructive and useful recommendations. A few days ago, a Special Meeting of the Joint Working Party was held here and the Report is now before us. I would like to take this opportunity to compliment the officials of our 3 countries for the skilful and efficient manner in which they have discharged their duties.

Mr. Chairman, we have therefore before us a comprehensive review of the progress of A.S.A., recommendations on future action, programme of projects and priorities. The time has therefore come for us all to implement these recommendations, to commence action immediately to turn these recommendations to concrete results. I have no doubt that to do all these require all the efforts and energies that our 3 countries can put into them. I have no doubt of the magnitude of the task confronting us. But with determination and a sense of purpose, I have no doubt we can produce the results, not only for our people to see, but for the world to see.

Mr. Chairman, South-East Asia today is still one of the most turbulent areas of the world. The human tragedy in Vietnam with

the danger of a possible direct confrontation between the major powers poses the greatest threat to world peace and security. But there are also encouraging signs - there is a new resurgence of the Asian identity and the recognition of the need to solve Asian problems in the Asian way without interference from any outside power. There is now a most encouraging trend with a greater willingness and an awareness among countries of the region of the need and value of regional cooperation for mutual benefit and advancement. The formation of the Asian Development Bank, the Ministerial Conference on South-East Asian Development in Tokyo and the Ministerial Conference for Asian and Pacific Cooperation are indicative of the prevailing mood and the acceptance of the idea of regional cooperation.

As we gather here today, we are conscious that our brothers in South-East Asia are watching us. The objectives of A.S.A. are positive and clear and it is my sincere hope that they will be convinced of our sincerity of purpose and of our determination to achieve these objectives. A.S.A., as you no doubt know, Ladies and Gentlemen, by coincidence in the 3 languages of the member countries, means hope, symbolising the natural aspirations of our people for economic advancement and for a better standard of living, for freedom and justice. We have a tremendous hope in the success of A.S.A. But as I have said to the Joint Working Party in Kuala Lumpur in April last, in the depth of my heart I think of A.S.A. as A Seed of Accord, a seed of accord in the modern world, where in spite of the United Nations Charter, there is still a lot of discord.

Mr. Chairman, A.S.A. signifies the hope of our people; signifies the accord in the hearts and minds of our people. If we, as members of A.S.A., are loyal and persistent in our task in endeavouring to fulfil this hope and to cultivate this seed of accord, then there is no reason why our success should not be rewarded by the growth of a tree; the branches of which will stretch in brotherhood to other Nations in this area, and the frontier of A.S.A., this frontier of faith and hope among fellow freedom-loving nations in this region of Asia, we will sow in time to come that South-East Asia is an example to the world, of progress, of mutual understanding and of peaceful cooperation. We have made our decision, we have charted our course, let us, therefore, march forward resolutely with unyielding fervour and drive towards our ultimate goal.