

ADDRESS BY THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AT THE  
SEMINAR OF SENIOR OFFICERS AT THE STAFF  
TRAINING CENTRE PETALING JAYA ON 17TH  
AUGUST, 1964

I am very happy indeed to be invited to open the first of a series of seminars organised by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. The Seminar is intended for senior and top ranking officials from the States of Malaya, Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak together here for an exchange of views on Government policy and administration. A very comprehensive programme covering a wide range of subjects has been drawn up for you and I hope you would not only have very fruitful discussions here but also a very pleasant stay in Kuala Lumpur and that you would return to your posts with a broader perspective and better appreciation of the Federal Government machinery and policies.

I would like to extend my personal and very warm welcome to officers, particularly those from Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak who have come all the way to this national capital to participate in this seminar. Perhaps you are already aware that the seminar is designed to promote better understanding and greater administrative integration in having officers and Ministers working together as members of one family and one Government to serve the people of our new nation, Malaysia.

It should be our aim and those who believe in freedom and democracy to ensure that Malaysia becomes a unit, viable and happy country. We now live in an era in which Malaysia is subject both to acts of open aggression by our big neighbour and internal subversion by Communists and Indonesian agents. In spite of these, I am confident that if we are united and determined to defend the ideals of democracy and our national integrity and honour, we shall be able to overcome all difficulties.

As civil servants you have a great role to play in this task of nation-building. Upon your shoulders lies a heavy responsibility to see that the administration of the country is carried out properly. We should not just be satisfied with maintaining the routine and normal law and order but must develop and keep pace with the needs and aspirations of the people for a better life and to do these things the Government must appear to the ordinary people in the towns, villages, kampongs and long houses as one unified system of government. To them there is only one

Government since both Federal and State Governments are equally responsible for the welfare of the people. Therefore, there must be close coordination and excellent working relations between Federal and State Governments in carrying out Governmental functions and responsibilities so that the whole Government machinery can work as one cohesive unit. Every effort must be made to iron out any differences of view and resolve the difficulties in an amicable manner so that the Government at all levels can serve the people to their complete satisfaction. That is why I am happy to note that this seminar will be instrumental in bringing together Federal and State officers to work as a team in the administration of the country. In fact I hope that officers from the State would, in due course, be seconded to Federal Departments in Kuala Lumpur and in turn officers from the States of Malaya would be seconded to work in the States. By this inter-change of officers the country will have a smooth Federal and State machinery functioning as one integrated unit.

It is an indispensable requirement that officers serving in the State of Federal Departments should have the overall perspective with the prime objective of serving Malaysia first and foremost. Provincialism or parochialism must give way to national interests to make the country strong and viable. We should not always be thinking in terms of how much the Federal Government can give to the States and vice versa but should rather think and act in terms of how much we all can contribute to the wellbeing and strength of the nation. Officers in the States can rest assured that the Central Government is determined to assist them in every possible way so that they may assume higher and greater responsibilities in the administration. We must, however, have a loyal, efficient and incorruptible civil service. The country demands that we all should do our utmost at this very hour of trial. We must be prepared therefore to place our services and duty before self for the wellbeing of the nation.

In our endeavour to build a united nation we have to mould the various racial and cultural groups together so that out of these diversities there grows a cohesive unity. Some critics and pessimists may say that it is in this very multi-racial society that lie our weakness. Racialism and communalism fanned by extremists can be highly dangerous and disastrous and they must be checked. We must not allow the recent incidents in Singapore and Bukit Mertajam to occur again. I am convinced that with the proper sense of balance in the blending of races and through understanding and mutual goodwill, Malaysia should and will grow from strength to strength. As you know, even the best whisky on the market depends for its quality on proper balance in blending and mixing. Similarly the strongest structures are not made of one material alone but composed of a blend of reinforced concrete made of cement

and steel to form the permanent structure. It is my firm conviction, therefore, that the free association and joining together of Malays, Chinese, Indians, Ibans and Kadazans living and working side by side in peace and harmony will give us tremendous strength, resourcefulness and unity.

We have already made great headway in our vigorous efforts aimed at nation-building but I regret to say that the evil forces across the Straits would not like to see us develop into a happy and prosperous country. Indonesia has vowed to crush Malaysia and they want to drag us down to their low level of misery, poverty, mismanagement and maladministration. But they will fail. With God's blessing and with the assistance of our friends, we shall safeguard ourselves against the evil forces.

The best safeguard is, I think to have a united people dedicated to a programme of sound social and economic development. I do not propose to dwell on this matter in detail regarding the vital task of development and the considerable strides we have made towards the goal of achieving a better standard of living both in the rural and urban areas. You will be fully briefed in the latter stage of your seminar by officers of the Economic Planning Unit and the Ministry of National and Rural Development. What I should like to emphasize here is that we are determined to continue the vast development programmes hand in hand with our efforts to build up our forces to defend ourselves from external aggression. We have dedicated ourselves to accelerate the rate of development of this country particularly in the Borneo States. Indeed the very objective of Malaysia in attaining independence for the people of the former colonial territories of North Borneo and Sarawak is to prevent them from being subverted by the Communists and to accord them better amenities of life through development programmes in these areas. We have the will, the manpower and machinery to undertake this development and we shall mobilise all available and necessary resources to carry out our development programme to meet the aspirations of the people for a better standard of living.

But for rapid development to take place in the Borneo States, arrangements would have to be made to facilitate unimpeded movement of personnel, labour and capital within Malaysia. In the former Federation of Malaya we have had the good fortune of having been integrated politically and economically at a very early stage of our development with free movement of all the factors of production. This serves as a powerful instrument in promoting economic and social development and I hope that internal integration of all the States of Malaya would be effected as soon as possible to speed up the development in Sabah

and Sarawak. However, there may be among us certain groups of people with vested interests adopting "a dog in the manger attitude". They would rather be satisfied with the present status quo than to have the necessary skilled administrators and labour from Malaya, Singapore or abroad in development for fear that their privileged position might be jeopardised. We should banish such parochial attitudes which block and hamper development. I consider all the States of Malaysia as partners with a role to play in national as well as international affairs of our nation. If there is a job to be carried out every effort must be made to provide the personnel and resources to undertake the task for the good of the State or Country whether they came from the Borneo States, Singapore or Malaya. The provisions in the Inter Governmental Committee Report provide the necessary arrangements and safeguards for the Federal and States interests but then if these arrangements impede development they should be reviewed so that the needs and requirements of the people can be met. Nothing should hinder our paramount objective of building a united and happy Malaysia especially in the face of Indonesian confrontation. The challenge must be met on all fronts and for this purpose, efforts are being made to bring in skilled personnel and the necessary resources from Singapore and Malaya to help in the big construction and development programmes in the Borneo States. We cannot continue to be dependent on the Indonesian source for supply of labour which in the present situation might be subject to subversion by their intelligence agents.

The mixed feelings of the people in the States are well appreciated during this transitional period. In fact, before the formation of the Federation of Malaya, I shared the same fears and doubts while serving in a State. State Governments in Malaya then felt that they were giving up some of their rights to the Federal Government without receiving much in return. I was Menteri Besar of a State which like others were naturally anxious to protect their own interests. However, after Merdeka and on becoming a Federal Minister, I look back on those days and felt how wrong it was to think in terms of each individual State fighting for the preservation of State rights. For a Federation to succeed, it should have a strong system of Central Government entrusted with the necessary powers to develop the country. The results of the few years of Independence have proved that the system is a sound one and Malaysia will be sure to succeed if all of us act and think in terms of the whole nation — national interests should come before self or State interests.

Now Gentlemen, I look forward to you and your brother officers in carrying this message through and rally people round to stand solidly behind the national Government in its task of maintaining goodwill and racial harmony, to safeguard our national integrity and to sustain our rate of development for the happiness and prosperity of our people.

Once again, I wish you a pleasant and fruitful stay here for the duration of your seminar. And I have the great pleasure of declaring this Seminar open.