

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER AT THE
RECEPTION TO OFFICIALLY INAUGURATE
THE AMANAH-CHASE MERCHANT BANK
BERHAD AT THE NIRWANA BALLROOM,
HILTON HOTEL, KUALA LUMPUR ON 8TH
AUGUST, 1975

Mr. Chairman and Board of Directors Amanah-Chase Merchant Bank Berhad, Y.B. Encik Abdul Ghafar Baba, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is indeed a pleasure for me to be here this evening among such a distinguished gathering to officially inaugurate the Amanah-Chase Merchant Bank Berhad.

After a few days of anxiety and apprehension among all of us as a result of the incident at the AIA Building and the events that followed until the final take-off yesterday evening—an event which I am sure will not easily be forgotten by all of us—tonight's occasion is indeed a happy relief to me personally and I am sure also to all of us present here tonight.

The year 1975 seems to be an eventful and memorable one. I am sure Malaysians will never forget this as being the year that occasioned the most unprecedented happenings in the country.

First we had the World Hockey Championship in March and the big merry-go-round that it had caused due to the inclement weather where venues had to be changed and the time schedule altered.

Then we had the Ali-Bugner Fight in July with the whole nation almost becoming hysterical with enthusiasm.

The most recent event of course was the Japanese Red Army seizure of the AIA Building in which fifty people were held hostage for over two days.

As far as the last event is concerned, I would like very much to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to all Malaysians, civilians as well as those in uniforms for their calm discipline and dedication in meeting this challenge. They have acted very responsibly and demonstrated that Malaysians are able to meet any incident, happening or challenge with very great presence of mind.

On a lighter note, this incident has also given us some good opportunities. On one hand, Malaysia was made widely known to the world which in the normal course of event would have cost us so much money. And the other—to some at least—this has given them the ingredient for a much happier married life—it has made husband and wife more loving.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Coming back to tonight's occasion, I believe the Amanah-Chase Merchant Bank Berhad is the ninth merchant bank to be established in Malaysia. This I would say is a reflection of the economic strength of the Malaysian economy and the excellent investment climate which we have created in this country. It is also ample testimony to the fact that both public and private sector interests can be combined to work for the benefit of all.

The participation of the Komplek Kewangan Malaysia Berhad in this merchant bank marks yet another milestone in its history. Apart from expanding its scope of activities, it would now be able to assist the Government in achieving the nation's objective of increasing Bumiputra participation in the field of finance. The participation of the Chase Manhattan Overseas Banking Corporation, the Mitsubishi Bank Limited and the Orion Pacific Limited in this joint venture would ensure that the merchant bank would benefit from their international network of commercial banking and merchant banking offices, and promote the development of the money and capital markets in Malaysia.

Presently, merchant banks are becoming an increasingly important group of financial institutions in Malaysia, whose activities are expected to contribute significantly to economic growth, particularly in the agricultural and industrial sectors.

In our present state of development, emphasis has been placed in expanding rapidly the productive capacity of the nation so that the availability of goods and services in the country would be in keeping with increasing demand. The role of the merchant banks would be to assist in the identification and implementation of projects that would expand productive capacity. This is a field where the merchant banks have special expertise.

It has normally been accepted that merchant banks are the pace and trend-setters in the economic life of a country. With the increase in the number of these financial institutions, I would like to see that they spread their activities into the other sectors of the economy, especially to the agricultural sector. I know that it is not the normal sphere that merchant banks would go into but I would like to see that they provide the leadership wherever possible so that we will always ensure a balanced growth of our economy.

As someone remarked before, it is not so much the number of population that is of concern to us but the capacity of that population to produce and progress. And, in Malaysia, with the population just a little over ten million, our capacity for the moment is beyond that of some of the bigger nations but we would very much like to increase that capacity.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This task is not that of the Government alone. Each one of us has a role to play and a duty to do and this may go beyond one's own professional field of activity. But, if we are able to progress further in our own field of activity, we have to see to it that other fields too develop at an even pace. No one can deny that, in our present set-up, each sector is connected to the other and if one lags behind the other too will be affected. I am sure you all realise that good living is meant for all and that it must be our policy to level up so that the less fortunate of our people will have a decent standard of living.

Once again, I would like to congratulate those who have worked hard for the establishment of this merchant bank and I would like to wish them success in all their ventures. Thank you.