

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER AT THE  
OPENING OF THE NINTH MALAYSIA-  
SINGAPORE CONGRESS OF MEDICINE AT THE  
GENERAL HOSPITAL, KUALA LUMPUR ON 6TH  
SEPTEMBER, 1974

Mr President, Dr Chew Chin Hin, Lord President, Tan Sri Suffian, Mr Master, Dr G. Sreenevasan, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It gives me great pleasure to be here with you all this afternoon on the occasion of the Ninth Malaysia-Singapore Congress of Medicine. This will be the third Malaysia-Singapore Congress that I have had the honour to officiate and, if I may say so, each Congress appears to be bigger than the previous one.

I am glad to see that there are several distinguished medical personalities from the United Kingdom and Australia besides those from Singapore, who have come to participate in the all-important and high-powered symposium on the Current Concepts in Cancer. On behalf of my Government, I bid you all a special welcome and I heartily welcome the participants from our neighbouring countries—Indonesia, Hong Kong, Vietnam, Thailand and India.

I wish to thank both Dr Chew and Dr Sreenevasan for their kind words about me and I would like to assure you all that the new Government will carry out its duties with dedicated greater zeal and vigour. I have reappointed Tan Sri Lee Siok Yew to his old portfolio of Health in view of his devoted and dedicated services to the cause of health during the last few years.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

This year seems to be a harvest year for us in Malaysia in terms of various medical conferences held here in Kuala Lumpur. Soon after the Physicians, we had the Gynaecologists, and only four days ago the W.H.O. Regional meeting was held here. As I said then, medical specialists in a developing country like Malaysia should exchange ideas in their various fields with their counterparts in neighbouring countries. These gatherings, particularly this Congress, offer an excellent opportunity for experts in this region

to exchange such ideas and experiences and discuss mutual problems. This is all for the good of our people, since with the rapid expansion and industrialisation taking place in our countries and the introduction of newer methods in the agricultural and other scientific fields, the problems of pollution, nutrition and urban living, all present a new aspect for medical study.

With the improvement of health care and the introduction of modern medical methods, there has been a reduction in infant mortality rate and an increase in life expectancy of the general population. This in turn brings about problems of diseases in the older age group, such as cancer of the various organs of the body and problems of old age. Thus it is indeed appropriate at this stage that the Academy of Medicine and the National Cancer Society has decided to bring out experts to conduct a symposium on cancer and its various problems. Incidentally, this year we chose science and technology as the theme of our National Day celebration in the belief that it will play an important part in the development of this country. I am glad that our medical specialists will also be studying the medical problems that go hand in hand with the advance of science and technology in our countries.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is an interesting coincidence that this Academy of Medicine as stated by your President just now, was founded in 1957, the year of our independence. And like us too the Academy has flourished and grown from strength to strength, contributing immensely to the progress of medical science. As it should be, the Academy continues to maintain its bi-national character and I strongly feel it should remain thus since your invaluable publication will continue to serve as an important link in disseminating knowledge pertaining to your specialised fields. The Annals of the Singapore Academy of Medicine in particular is a professional efforts in the full sense of the word and I am sure very few people realise that some of your colleagues have assiduously undertaken a serious study of attempted suicides in our two countries which makes as good reading as Agatha Christie.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Coming to the subject of medical and health development in this country, I would like to say that we in Malaysia are currently

planning a very ambitious rural health service and in the next few years we hope to have several new hospitals in the less developed and remote areas of the country. It is the intention of our Government here to provide specialist medical care to the very remote regions of the country. I would like to express my sincere thanks to friendly countries who have kindly agreed to allow their medical specialists to serve with us for a definite period. A blue-print is being prepared to develop national and regional hospitals and in this way make available to everyone the best possible medical care.

We are now in the fourth year of our Five-Year Development Plan (1971-1975). The capital investment in the Health Sector of the Plan has been revised upwards during the Mid-Term Review and is now expected to cost M\$226.79 million. This involves the implementation of no less than 1,800 projects covering Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak. Up to July 1974, some 847 projects have been completed and commissioned, 313 projects are under construction, 118 projects have gone out on tender and 534 projects are in various stages of planning.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

One aspect of this Congress that gives me personal satisfaction is the fact that you have established the Tun (Dr) Ismail Oration in memory of my former colleague and friend who had done so much for this country. The late Tun Dr Ismail had always kept a lively interest in the medical profession and had always stood up for it in our Cabinet deliberations. It was at his insistence that the Garlick and Webb Report was produced. I am indeed happy that the first Oration will be delivered by a no less distinguished personality than our Lord President, Tan Sri Mohd. Suffian, who was a close friend of the late Tun Dr Ismail and is very knowledgeable in all wordly matters.

I am very happy to note the rapid progress in the field of post-graduate studies for which much credit is due to the various Colleges (some of which are only recently established) in co-operation with your Academy. In this way, we have been able to short-circuit the process of training for our specialists. Dr Sreenevasan rightly observed that there is increasing demand for Specialist services, not particularly because our society has become more affluent, but because I feel our people are entitled to such services.

Mention was also made just now about granting a Royal Charter for the Academy. I shall certainly give thought to this and perhaps at the appropriate time your wishes will be fulfilled.

I would also like to associate myself with you all in congratulating the newly inducted honorary members, particularly Dr Syed Mohamad. He has served the cause of higher education and medicine, besides taking an active part in the industrial development of the country.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I now declare open the Ninth Malaysia-Singapore Congress of Medicine and I wish you success in your deliberations.