

SPEECH BY THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
AT THE OPENING OF THE SEMINAR ON •
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Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am indeed honoured to be here and to be given the delightful duty of opening this Seminar. I would like on behalf of the Government and the people of Malaysia to welcome our friends, the distinguished delegates, from our neighbouring countries Thailand, Philippine, Taiwan, India, Vietnam, Singapore and Australia which are all Malaysia's good friends. I hope that during your stay in our country you will enjoy every moment not only during your deliberation in the Conference Room but also the time spent at leisure and pleasures.

This Seminar on Democracy and Development in South East Asia is to my mind a timely subject to be discussed and is of great importance. In a developing region like our, the success of one, is very much dependent upon the other. We are all now at the crucial cross road of history but the choice between freedom and progress in all its aspects and totalitarian rule under which the people's hope and aspirations for a happier, healthier and richer life are blunted in the midst of ignorance, poverty and disease. Geographically South East Asia's strategic importance has long been recognized by all the great powers of the world. Because of this, peace and prosperity, security and stability of this region are of paramount consideration not only to all of us here but internationally in preserving democracy. Never has militant Communist inroad in the name of equality, freedom and nationalism threatened with its open aggression, infiltration and subversion in certain countries of South East Asia the orderly development and progress of those countries. With Communist China's emergence as a great military power a threat is posed not only to us in this region but to other parts of the world as well. So far pro-Peking forces are only active in

Vietnam and Laos but knowing the nature of militant Communist expansion we can expect further aggression to take place. In this connection we have no time for philosophical resignation nor do we have any respect for the attitude of despair shown by some countries. Our role must be to dispel unwanted pessimism and to reaffirm by our policy that democracy can provide a better way of solving the social and economic problem of this region that militant and aggressive Communism can ever hope to do.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this Seminar signifies democracy in that so many of us from different friendly countries can come together and talk freely and frankly the way we wish our country to be governed and developed for the benefit of our people. So, therefore, Ladies and Gentlemen, those of us who have come to this Seminar have a mutual base of understanding which form a firm foundation for our deliberations.

It is our view that the two greatest antidotes to counteract the poison of Militant Communist penetration and subversion, is the practice of democracy and the implementation of a sound national development plan. In the practice of democracy it may not be possible, particularly, in a developing country like ours to move ahead so fast and achieve a standard of democratic practice as it has been attained in more highly developed country in the free world because many of these countries have been practicing democracy for centuries and the techniques that they have acquired were only attained after years and years of trial, error and experience. Therefore it is sometimes necessary for the practice of democracy to be modified from time to time, from country to country, in order to suit different National needs in different National transitional period. Assuming that the ultimate aim to be achieved in the practice of democracy is the principle that the people of our countries, the citizens and voters of a free democratic nation are the exclusive source of political authority and their consent is the foundation of the power of Government.

Then I think that this basic principle of democracy is the one thing which will ensure the peace, prosperity and sensible leadership of the entire world. For example, although I am myself, a democratically elected leader I find that the most sobering influence of the actions of a political leader is the fact that once every so many

years on returning to the voters for a new mandate in order to continue governing the country the best record of leadership and purpose must be held up to the judgement of all citizens eligible to vote. Therefore in democratic practice all political leaders who offer their services to the nation for another term of office have got to hold their breath while the people themselves decide. This breath holding is in itself a good antidote to reckless dictatorship and sovereign influence of misguided political leadership.

I hope Ladies and Gentlemen those of you who are honoured and welcomed guests in our country will forgive me for discussing democracy and development mostly within the Malaysian context. I am sure you will bear with me the courtesy and kindness because it is within this Malaysian context that my own ideas of democracy and development have been formulated. I would like to say that the launching of democratic way of life after the ending of colonial rule in Malaya and later Malaysia was perhaps more difficult than in other developing countries. I say difficult because there were circumstances which apply particularly to Malaysia and perhaps do not exist in many other countries. These circumstances were two-fold. First, we had to build our democracy within a framework of a Federation of States like those of you in Australia know and our friends in America know even better. Government by federation can be cumbersome, can be frictional and can be frustrating unless and until it is maintained on a basis of maximum mutual understanding of its complement parts so that the parochial and local interest are made wherever necessary to be come subservient to the higher interest of national benefit and national progress for the entire Federation as a whole.

The second circumstance which applies to Malaysia but does not apply necessarily to some other democratic nation which are lucky in that they are comprised entirely of people of the same ethnic group, of the same language and of the same religions. But we here in Malaysia in launching our democratic way of life immediately after independence have to act and apply democratic principle almost three dimensional without at the same time lessening our national determination of dynamic development within a framework of a democratic way of life.

Not only did we have to learn methods of governing a Federation, we also had to learn the technique and skill of handling a

mixed comjunity and apply democracy with an electorate comprising of Malays, Chinese, Indians and others and then blend this mixture into a mature nation, Malaysian in outlook, Malaysian in aim and attitude and back-stocked by a form of Federation so that we would forge forward in our democratic destiny.

And yet in spite of these circumstances I am happy to stand here today and say with modesty that both democracy and development in Malaysia have got off to a very good start. So Ladies and Gentlemen, I think, perhaps the same principles which require to be learned for the succesful working of a democratic Federation such as Malaysia are the same principles which will guarantee stability, democratic development and prosperity in South East Asia and these principles are based on the same determination to achieve the maximum mutual understanding, together with the ability to accentuate our similiarities with the definite positive attempt to follow the areas of mutual agreement and the determination to minimise our differences, What is required in my view to achieve this is a type of moderate and balanced leadership which will focus the attention of our people on the main ideal of mutual understanding and the major goals of development so that the greater aims of our destiny are forever foremost, and our petty differences appear trivial against the back-drop of the greater task to be achieved.

To us in Malaysia and I hope a similar realisation everywhere else the need is urgent and ever evident for people who cherish freedom and peace to give force and momentum in preaching and practising democracy that will gather fervour and faith and if necessary the will and determination to fight in its defence. In other words democracy must be regarded as an ideology to be taught and exemplified. Therefore in the common interest of all of us there is need for better unity among the people of this region and of Aşia as a whole. The achievement of this unity is a challenge; a unity of practical cooperation for which we have the capacity and resources to build. We cannot be isolated from one another and the peace and prosperity in our region is of concern to all of us not only in our interest but in the interest of the world in whose affairs we now have an increasingly important part to play. It was in the pursuit of this regional cooperation that our Prime Minister proposed the formation of the Association of South East Asia in 1961. Though ASA has suffered some initial setback it is hoped that its importance

will be realised soon and that other countries friendly to us, dedicated to peace and progress would join the Association. ASA has already proved itself a constructive ideal and the only practical idea that can benefit all the members in a wide sphere of cooperation and friendly relation. In ASA, we can claim to have made constructive efforts in regional cooperation. Let us contribute to the stability of South East Asia through social and economic progress by carrying policies of goodwill and cooperation.

It is now recognized that regional cooperation is one of the best means of economic progress as well as the best guarantee of political independence. There is need of every peace loving nation in South East Asia to work and cooperate with one another in their efforts for economic progress or for other purpose on the basis of mutual interest and for the future peace and well-being of our region. Malaysia's foreign policy is primarily directed to the strengthening of relationship with foreign countries and the neutralisation of forces hostile to us. All of us must feel that there is room for everyone and that we can live in peace with one another provided of course we respect one another's rights provided too we realise that we owe one another for the good and well-being, the progress and happiness based on the peace and security of this region. As I said in Malaysia we have achieved national unity of our multi-racial society through the practice of democratic institution in which our national policies are all geared to create a Malaysian consciousness and our action the fields of economic development and social services is the reflection of our desire to preserve this institution for the happiness and well-being of our people. The successful working of democracy is due to tolerance and goodwill of our people of many racial origins living and working together in a healthy spirit of friendship and cooperation.

Ours is in an age of extraordinary fluidity in South East Asia where our interest must be constantly assessed and re-defined to meet the desire of our people and in order that our free institution is safeguarded. There must be a continuous search for peace and happiness and a smug satisfaction with the existing state of affairs can only lead to difficulties and disaster. Apart from good leadership we must have the ability to govern the speed and nature of change taking place around us. What is called a great social revolution is happening now but by revolution I do not mean the too

familiar slogan chanting revolution which means hunger, chaos and disturbance. A nation's greatness is not prompted by empty shouting. We in Malaysia are content only with a silent revolution and the success of our development programme is a living testimony to the righteousness of the course through which we have steered our nation following independence.

In the field of development most countries nowadays have the expert means to produce economic national development plans but every plan in themselves are of no value unless they can be fully implemented and financed. With regard to the implementation of development we have in Malaysia tried to evolve our own technique of translating our development plan from paper into action in order to achieve tangible results on the ground. I do not wish to discuss the details of what we are doing but I would like to say to our distinguished visitors that if in the course of your stay in Kuala Lumpur you wish to visit our National Development Operations Room or any other Development Operation Room throughout the country you would be most welcome.

With regard to the financing of development and the raising of funds to give the people of South East Asia both urban and rural a better way of life it seems to me a want on waste of money to have to pour funds into tanks and military weapons directed to death when they could have been directed towards development. You will remember at the end of last war when after the last shot was fired, every nation in the world settled down with the hope of peace and prosperity and what has happened there is still too much fighting again in the world and I believe that if some militant communist leaders were in fact sincere in their leadership and sincere in their wish to produce a better way of life then they would call off in the vast areas of South East Asia their wanton aggression which only result in spilling blood and money because blood and money are the two essential ingredients of national development in any country.

I am sure the delegates of this Seminar will agree with me that in their mutual desire to see Democracy thrive in this part of the world we only ask the Communists to allow us one thing and that is to leave us alone to run and develop our own countries. Even if they do not agree with our democratic way of life, and our sincere

desire for development, they should at least, have the courtesy to co-exist with us rather than ruining the peace and prosperity of the world with their aggressive ambitions.

It is a pity that one of the largest countries in South East Asia, with the greatest potential in natural resources for development, cannot apply these principles of co-existence without interfering in the affairs of its neighbours.

Because I am sure their misguided policy of Confrontation against Malaysia is probably doing Indonesia more harm than it is to Malaysia and diverting its national energies and funds in the wrong direction when they should be poured in the direction of much needed development in their own country.

In spite of Confrontation, I have always felt in my heart that there has been no ill-feeling between the peoples of Indonesia and the peoples of Malaysia.

We have a lot in common.

As you know, we here in Malaya, before the formation of Malaysia, suffered for twelve years from militant Communist attempts to dominate us and, during that time of our first National Emergency, we had to divert our energies and funds towards combatting communist terrorism at a time when we should have been diverting them towards development and the evolution of a stable Democracy.

This lesson learnt from the evils of Militant Communism is now being learnt by the leaders of Indonesia and they may be glimmer of hope now that they are recuperating from the ill-effects of Communism, may be Indonesian leadership will see that the only way for their country to develop and the only way for the many millions of their people to enjoy a better way of life and a higher standard of living is to call off this Confrontation and to cooperate, with all its neighbours towards the mutual aim of greater prosperity for the whole of South East Asia.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I do sincerely hope that you'll have an enjoyable and constructive Seminar after which I will also have principles of democracy and development in South East Asia. Now I have much pleasure in declaring open your Seminar. Thank you.