

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER AT THE  
INFORMAL DINNER GIVEN BY HIS EXCEL-  
LENCY THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL SIR JOHN  
KERR ON 16TH OCTOBER, 1975

Your Excellency, Sir John Kerr and Lady Kerr, The Right Honourable Prime Minister<sup>1</sup>, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I would like to begin by expressing to Your Excellency my deep appreciation of your warm words of welcome and of the kind sentiments that you have just expressed about my country and the relations between Australia and Malaysia.

On behalf of my wife, the members of my Delegation, as well as my own, let me also say how deeply touched we have been by the generous hospitality and the many courtesies which have been shown to us ever since our arrival as well as the unsparing efforts which have been made to ensure that our stay here is useful, comfortable and interesting.

Your Excellency, it is some six years since I was last in Australia and I have long looked forward to the present visit which has added significance for me personally and for my country in that this is my first visit here as the Head of the Government of Malaysia. Australia and Malaysia have always been sturdy friends and unlike some of the visits I have made in recent years, I am not here to break new grounds or to establish new ties. However, it is central to Malaysia's thinking that in making new friends, we should not neglect old and tested ones. The bonds of friendship between Australia and Malaysia stretching from a period even before Malaysia's independence some eighteen years ago have been forged in good as well as in more uncertain times.

I have come therefore on a mission of goodwill, to express Malaysia's keen appreciation of the sacrifices and assistance which we have received from Australia relating both to our security and to our development and to enhance and enrich further these deep

---

<sup>1</sup> Mr Wallace Rowling.

and abiding ties. My task will not be difficult. Even in the brief time I have been here, I am acutely conscious of the goodwill and good neighbourliness on the part of Australia towards Malaysia which the present gathering so happily testifies. This, I assure you, Your Excellency, is reciprocated by us in full measure.

Your Excellency, it is a common place to say that this is a world of change but the changes in Southeast Asia could not be more dramatic and momentous than those which took place about six months ago. Peace has come at long last to the Indochina States and, with it, new challenges and fresh opportunities.

Malaysia and the other ASEAN countries have accepted these changes and are fully determined to rise to the occasion which now present itself to fashion a new structure of peace and cooperation in Southeast Asia. This is a time to discard old attitudes and suspicions and to replace them with a fresh perspective in tune with the new realities. Australia, too, I know, takes this view and together, I am sure, we can work for the greater good of Southeast Asia.

Australia's role in Southeast Asia is in many ways unique. Although situated on the periphery of Southeast Asia with a culture that is essentially European, Australia has consciously made itself a part of the peoples in the Asia and the Pacific region and has rightly earned its place and influence well beyond the size of its population.

As a modern society and a source of technical and scientific know how, Australia has generously shared its knowledge and its prosperity with others in our region. Australia's contribution to such multi-lateral organisation as the Colombo Plan is very well-known. Malaysia can count itself fortunate to have the biggest student population in Australia but there are also thousands of other students in Australia who come from other parts of Southeast Asia.

Australia is one of the first countries outside Southeast Asia to have come forth with concrete suggestions to collaborate with ASEAN and certain projects are already on the way. Likewise, I find Australia's support for the proposal to create a Zone of

Peace, Freedom and Neutrality in Southeast Asia most reassuring. Australia has been constructive and its co-operation is a source of strength in our efforts to promote regionalism which is the corner-stone of the future stability and security of both our countries.

Your Excellency, may I thank you again for this splendid hospitality and this very delightful evening. My wife and I, and members of my party look forward to the rest of our stay in this exciting and librant country.

May I now invite all distinguished guests to join me in a toast to the good health of His Excellency, the Governor-General, Lady Kerr and to the continued prosperity and well-being of the Government and the people of Australia.