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SPEECH BY THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
AT THE OPENING OF THE
JOINT WORKING PARTY OF THE ASA AT THE
DEWAN BAHASA DAN PUSTAKA,
KUALA LUMPUR ON 27TH APRIL, 1966.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

One of the main burdens of democracy is that Ministers have to inflict continuously their speeches on their listeners. If in talking to you today I have to inflict you with this burden, let me tell you from my heart that to me it is a most pleasant task because, in standing before you now at this, the third Meeting of the Joint Working Party of ASA, this opportunity to make a speech to welcome you on behalf of the Government and people of Malaysia, gives me more pleasure, more hope and more enjoyment than any other speech I have had to make, for a long time.

Today marks the coming together again, with renewed hope and renewed vitality, the representatives of three sensible peace-loving nations in South East Asia - the Republic of Philippines, the Royal Kingdom of Thailand, and my own country, Malaysia; and since the recent meeting of the Standing Committee of ASA in Bangkok, I have been looking forward, with hope and pleasure, to this opportunity of greeting all the delegates who are our friends in the Philippines and our friends in Thailand.

It is unnecessary for me to repeat and say how very welcome all of you are to the shores of Malaysia, because I am sure that before you entered this Conference Room, from the very time that your Aeroplane touched down at Subang International Airport, you have proof that you are most welcome to Malaysia as my good friend, on entering a friend's house is always welcome.

The object of this Conference is to prepare the way for a Conference of Foreign Ministers to be held next month.

As all of you know it was at the Foreign Ministers' Conference in Bangkok on the 31st of July 1961 that our three countries launched one of the greatest concepts of regional goodwill and cooperation in forming ASA where, enshrined in the Bangkok Declaration, we came together and pledged our three countries to work together in harmony and unity for the benefit of our people in the social, cultural, technical and research and development fields so that we would learn from each other, gain by mutual and unselfish help to each other and progress as free countries, upholding the ideals of peace, freedom, social justice and goodwill.

All these words sound very fine in speeches and on paper but let it not be believed that ASA is a dream or an ideal.

ASA, the coming together of our three nations for the benefit of our people is a vision and a reality.

So this Conference today is evidence of our determination to translate this ASA into the realm of realism and practical purpose burning the last four weeks and have lost Counsel as the member of sketch that I made.

To those who doubt the possibility of achieving this reality let me reiterate the spirit behind the Bangkok Declaration in which all of us, our three countries, came together with the conviction that mutual cooperation in the economic field and cultural relationship will greatly contribute to our endeavour to enhance the welfare of our respective nations and promote better understanding and greater mutual appreciation among our various peoples.

As the World advances today, with modern sciences, modern techniques, and modern methods of travel, no country, no Independent Nation, can either attempt, or hope, to survive alone! In this modern age countries have been brought closer together in thought, in action and in deed.

The World is becoming more and more a unified place and there is need to sow the friendship and cooperation among Nations.

The first seeds of international unity must be sown both in our own national garden and then over the boundaries of our gardens,

and therefore the thinking behind the concept of ASA was to cultivate a neighbourly friendship first and with our neighbours, Thailand and the Philippines, we are all neighbours in this region of South East Asia.

Then, as a unified region, working together with understanding, we can play a greater part in the harmony and future peace and understanding of the World.

And in sowing the seeds of goodwill, of good neighbourliness and mutual understanding, we are sowing in fact a type of plant, which can take root, which can, and will thrive and in time will produce from its branches the medicine so badly needed in the World today - a natural product which can be turned into the most powerful "weed killer" against the growth of the poisonous weeds of subversion and aggression.

This seed of goodwill, ASA, is also one of the most potent fertilisers for peace and progress because without mutual understanding and cooperation between nations - there can be no peace, and no progress!

The real spirit behind the Bangkok Declaration, which doubtless can be distorted by critics of ASA, is that we, our three nations, ask the World permission to do one thing and one thing only, and that is to leave each of our own countries unmolested and unexploited by others, so that we can progress and develop, both economically and culturally, to fulfil our destiny of ensuring that our peoples, the Thais, the Philipinos, the Malaysians will have a better way of life, a happy, and take our rightful place in the World as freedom-loving peoples, and as citizens of free, sovereign Nations!

ASA is in no way an attempt to form a power block, but it is an attempt to form a powerful block; powerful in goodwill, powerful in mutual understanding and powerful in the determination to enhance the welfare of our own peoples.

Since the launching of this Spaceship of ASA much work has been done to get it firmly established in orbit.

And the difficulties of space travel are the same as those experienced in the launching of ASA into orbit.

First one has to get over the ground friction on take off. This we have achieved!

The Bangkok Declaration was the launching pad!

Secondly on the journey of space travel one meets with "turbulence", and ASA, shortly after its launching met with "turbulence" caused by a monsoon which blew with some force from the South West.

However, Ladies and Gentlemen, we have weathered that storm and ASA is back again on its correct and original course. Today marks its entry into another phase.

As with space travel, one has to attain sufficient *speed* and purpose to get through the "sound barrier" and, Ladies and Gentlemen, I think that, by virtue of this Conference here today, ASA is now through the "sound barrier", and we are getting past the stage of merely making sounds and "talking" and are now moving into the next phase of gaining speed and coordinated action, so that ASA will change its role from a Spaceship into a "Telstar".

You remember the launching of a "Telstar" over the Atlantic which brought tremendous advances in communication between the United States and Europe by being able to provide better communications, better television programmes and other such means of international intercourse in that part of the World.

So also, Ladies and Gentlemen, ASA is the "Telstar" of this Vegin; it is not a scientific mechanical product in so much that it gives us better physical communications, but it is a "human Telstar", giving us better communications on a three way exchange Of entry into the hearts and minds of the peoples of our three Nations; it is a means of mutual interchange of ideas and action for the development, progress and benefit of our respective people.

The Bangkok Declaration laid out the provision of a machinery of fruitful collaboration in the utilization of our respective natural resources, the development of our agriculture and industry, the expansion of our trade, the improvement of our transport and communications facilities and generally raising the living standards of our people.

This machinery has been set up in the form of the ASA Secretariat, but a *machine in itself is of no value* to any one unless it works efficiently, and unless there is an abundant *amount of fuel to fire it into action*, and to maintain its *drive* and power! As I said earlier, ASA has got through the "sound barrier" and now is the time not merely for talk and words but for *positive action* and in having the honour to declare open this Conference I would like to stress *above all* the present need for the success of ASA; it is for us *now* to get down to some hardwork and translate the Bangkok Declaration from words on paper, into *tangible results* in each of our member countries so that, both our people and the world, can see that ASA is a *reality in action!*

We must *all of us* here participating in this Conference take away with us, back to our various countries, the determination to follow up each and every resolution with determination and hardwork, so that, at succeeding conferences of this nature and at the conferences of Foreign Ministers, we can continually take stock, and show that in coming together in ASA, we can put into *practice* our principles of mutual cooperation and prove *with projects spread throughout* our various countries that ASA is not an unattainable aspiration but is in fact the *positive purposeful project* for progress!

And finally, Ladies and Gentlemen, as you no doubt know, by a coincidence "ASA", in our National Language here in Malaysia, means "hope" and I and the Government of Malaysia, have tremendous *hope* in the success of ASA!

But let me give you my personal interpretation of A-S-A. In the depth of my heart I think of A-S-A as "A Seed of Accord" - in a modern world, which, in spite of the United Nations Charter, there is still a lot of *discord!*

You, the delegates of this Conference, are the custodians and cultivators of this precious "seed of accord" planned for the progress of our nations and the harmony of the Region.

If we, as members of ASA, are loyal and persistent in our task in cultivating this seed of accord correctly, then there is no reason why our success should not be rewarded by the growth of a tree;

the branches of which will stretch in brotherhood of other nations in this area, and the frontier of ASA, this frontier of faith and hope among fellow-freedom loving nations in this region, Asia we will show, in time to come, that South East Asia is an example to the world, of progress, of mutual understanding and peaceful cooperation.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I have great pleasure in declaring this Conference open.