

UCAPAN PERDANA MENTERI MERANGKAP
PENGGERUSI MAJLIS PENASIHAT PERPADUAN
NEGARA DI MESYUARAT MAJLIS PENASIHAT
PERPADUAN NEGARA, DI DEWAN TUNKU
ABDUL RAHMAN, KUALA LUMPUR PADA
30^{HB} NOVEMBER, 1972

Y.B. Menteri-Menteri, Saudara-saudara Sekalian.

Terlebih dahulu saya mengucapkan terima kasih atas kehadiran saudara-saudara di sini pagi ini, terutama kepada ahli-ahli baru Majlis iaitu Y.B. Datuk S. P. Seenivasagam, Y.B. Dr Tan Chee Khoon, Encik Liew Sip Hon dan Encik Alex Lee, yang telah menerima jemputan saya untuk berkhidmat dalam Majlis ini. Saya percaya keempat-empat tokoh politik ini boleh memberi sumbangan besar kepada kerja-kerja Majlis di masa akan datang.

Seperti dimaklum, Majlis ini tidak bersidang sekian lama dan dalam tempoh itu saya telah membuat perubahan Kabinet dengan membentuk Kementerian Perpaduan Negara¹ yang mengambil alih tugas-tugas Jabatan Perpaduan Negara dan Majlis Muhibbah Negara dulu. Dengan penyusunan semula itu, saya telah melantik Tun V. T. Sambanthan sebagai seorang Menteri yang kanan mengetuai Kementerian ini dan seterusnya melantik beliau menjadi Timbalan Pengerusi Majlis ini mengambil tempat Tan Sri Lee Siok Yew dan Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie yang mempunyai tugas-tugas tertentu sebelum Kementerian ini ditubuhkan.

Saudara-saudara,

Dalam mesyuarat ini, saya bercadang hendak membentuk beberapa buah Jawatankuasa Majlis yang akan bertanggungjawab atas perkara-perkara tertentu. Kita semua maklum Majlis dalam bentuknya sekarang ini adalah besar dengan senarai lima puluh satu orang ahli. Sungguhpun banyak faedah yang didapati dari bertukar fikiran dan pendapat dalam sidang Majlis, saudara-saudara tentulah bersetuju bahawa tugas-tugas yang detail lebih berkesan dan

¹ Ditubuhkan pada 1hb Jun, 1972.

sempurna dijalankan oleh Jawatankuasa Kecil yang dapat bersidang kerap dari semasa ke semasa. Dengan itu sebahagian besar dari kerja-kerja kita akan dijalankan menerusi Jawatankuasa ini yang akan membuat laporan dan syor kepada Majlis ini untuk persejujuannya dan tindakan selanjutnya.

Dengan penyusunan semula Majlis ini dan juga dengan adanya Kementerian Perpaduan Negara, saya yakin dan percaya tugas-tugas Majlis akan dilaksanakan dengan lebih berkesan. Saya berharap ahli-ahli majlis ini akan berazam memberikan kerjasama dan menyumbangkan tenaga serta fikiran mereka untuk mencapai tujuan dan cita-cita Majlis ini. Sebagaimana di masa sudah-sudah, saya berharap ahli-ahli akan mengeluarkan buah fikiran mereka serta membincangkan masalah-masalah di hadapan kita dengan jujur, serious dan penuh bertanggungjawab. Hanya dengan demikian, barulah perbincangan Majlis ini benar-benar berfaedah kepada kita semua, demi kepentingan negara.

I expect members to speak their minds seriously and frankly. This Council is not an arena for political-party or pressure-group conflicts. This Council is a forum in which concerned and responsible citizens representing a broad spectrum of our society have the responsibility of contributing to the important objectives of national unity, on which the ultimate survival of this country must rest.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In carrying out our tasks, I would like members of the Council to be constantly aware of the broad considerations which must guide us. It is not our business to question the basic rights, obligations and assumptions of our society. Our task is to build on the basic agreements of the past in order to achieve national unity.

We are not, as it were, starting out afresh. A lot has been achieved both in the N.C.C. which preceded this Council and which considered and accepted two very important documents, namely the Rukunegara and the New Economic Policy, as well as in the general political arena in the years of our independence struggle as well as since. The basic elements of rights and responsibilities are all there in the Constitution, which we have all accepted.

It is, therefore, no use now to talk about our rights on the basis of particular racial groups: that time is over. It is now our responsibilities to see how the various racial groups fit into a cohesive whole, how to unite to achieve the objectives which have been agreed upon.

Let me take the basic objectives of the New Economic Policy as an example. It is no use going over again the arguments and the debate which led to the formulation of these objectives. We have agreed that we must help the have-nots and we must rectify the economic imbalances in our society. Let us now examine in specific terms how we can achieve these objectives, how we can achieve unity through development.

In the same manner, if I may take another example, let us examine how we can achieve unity through the national language. Everyone accepts that Bahasa Malaysia is the national language of this country in the same way that everyone accepts that there is a place for the other languages, such as English, Mandarin, Cantonese, Hokkien, Tamil and so on. In considering the question of language today, let us consider it from the point of view of national unity. Bahasa Malaysia is the national language and there is a legitimate place for the other languages. The question of fighting for language rights, therefore, no longer exists. The question for us now is how to achieve national unity through the national language.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In considering this matter, let us take into account the historical point in time of our nation. The time has now past to achieve national unity by seeking the unity of particular racial groups first. Likewise, it is no longer relevant to talk about achieving the unity of any particular racial group through the use of its language. There must instead be two sincere desire on the part of everyone to promote national unity through national means. What we want to achieve now is not the unity of particular racial groups but the unity of all Malaysians. Our objective is national unity, the unity of all Malaysians, through the national language, namely Bahasa Malaysia.

Let me repeat it here, lest I be misunderstood, that this is not to deny the legitimate place of the other languages. This is already entrenched in the Constitution. Let us not confuse the two. It is one thing to keep an eye to ensure that these legitimate rights are observed. The task before us is to achieve National unity and this can only be done through National mean i.e. National Language.

Related closely to the question of language is the question of culture. I would like members of the Council—and indeed everyone else who consider these questions—to take a long-term view of the history and identity of our nation. Where do we stand in the broad pattern of nation-states and in the general flow of history and culture? Let us not be too obsessed with immediate and transient issues, which in any event we cannot solve unless we read history and current developments correctly.

We must have a sense of our history and a sense of our own identity. We must read our history in the broad perspective of what has happened and what is happening around us. We must develop our own identity, based on our own history and on what we are today. Malaysia is in many ways unique in that we are the meeting point of many of the great cultures of the world. But this does not mean that we should lose our own cultural identity. Rather it means that these elements should influence our own culture so that we will see in time the emergence of a new native-based culture which is enriched and enlivened by the different cultural elements which have come to our country.

It is not, therefore, a question of preserving these cultural elements in their original form—indeed, it is worthwhile to remember that often in their own countries of origin they are not being preserved. What is important is to use these elements to contribute to the growth of a truly Malaysian culture based on the traditions and history of our own country.

Saudara-saudara,

Saya telah menyentuh beberapa masalah pokok dan penting yang mana akan dikaji dan dibincangkan lebih lanjut oleh Majlis ini menerusi Jawatankuasanya. Secara ringkas saya cuba menggariskan dasar am dan haluan yang perlu diturut oleh Majlis ini

dalam melaksanakan tanggungjawabnya memupuk perpaduan negara. Adalah mustahak bagi kita mencari perspektif yang sebenar supaya penghuraian masalah akan mempercepatkan lagi tercapainya objektif-objektif negara.

Saya percaya sidang kita kali ini akan menghasilkan fikiran-fikiran dan pendapat-pendapat yang membina dan dengan itu saya ucapkan selamat bersidang.