

SPEECH BY THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER TO THE
FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS ASSOCIATION AT
ADELPHI HOTEL, SINGAPORE ON 26TH JULY, 1965

Mr. President and Gentlemen,

I am indeed grateful to you all for inviting me to this lunch and for giving me the opportunity of meeting you and speaking to you today. I would first like to thank you all for the interest and understanding you have shown in our country and our problems in this part of the world.

I believe in a function like this it has been customary that the most important item of the proceedings is the questions that you will ask me after I have spoken. Therefore, I do not intend to speak very long and I can assure you I will be prepared to answer any questions you would like to ask me afterwards. We in this country believe in the freedom of the Press and indeed there is probably no need for me to reassure you that we intend to maintain the freedom of the Press in this country consistent with the principle and practice of parliamentary democracy which we firmly believe in. Please do not regard me as something fragile and must be handled with care, after having such a nice meal I am prepared to be twisted by you as much as you like so long as you do not twist the facts that I am giving you.

Our young Nation — Malaysia — has now been in existence for almost two years. We know when we decided to establish this new Nation there will be problems and difficulties. Any Federal system of Government has problems, problems between Central Government and constituent State Governments. One has to look at countries like United States, Australia or Canada to realise that even after years of working a Federal system of Government, Government problems do still arise. In Malaysia we not only have problems of endeavouring to work a Federal system of Government to adapt Governments under a colonial power to that of an independent Nation, we have also the problems of the multi-racial society. Fortunately for us, our Constitution has been drawn up from experiences obtained in federated countries and also the eleven States of the former Federation of Malaya had many years of experience working successfully under a Federal system of Government.

There are fourteen component States of our Federation. It is therefore necessary that we should look at the problems of our country

from the points of view of Malaysia as a whole rather than one or two States. The Alliance Party is in power in all States in Malaysia except Kelantan and Singapore. In all the States in which we the Central Government are in control, there are no problems in State and Central Government relations. Kelantan is controlled by the PMIP and until recently they showed great reluctance to cooperate with the Federal Government. It is only now that they have realized the necessity to do so and the results are already evident. Singapore is under the control of another opposition group, the PAP. Singapore has had no previous experience of working in a Federal system of Government. Singapore being a city state has problems peculiar to its own and therefore we cannot solve the problems of Malaysia from the angle of Singapore only and we cannot employ the same methods of tackling problems in Singapore as tackling problems in our other States of Malaysia. In a Federal system of Government there must be a spirit of give and take. The Federation cannot work on the basis of only taking and not giving. Though the progress of Singapore may be important to Malaysia, but by the same token the progress of Malaysia as a whole is equally vital to Singapore. I know it will take time for the new States of Malaysia — Sabah and Sarawak and Singapore to adjust themselves to the new set up. However, with patience and understanding and cooperation I have no doubt that difficulties can be resolved.

As I said Malaysia is just two years old and from the day of its birth has to face threat from outside. However, despite confrontation and aggressive acts by our neighbour, I am proud of the way in which our people of all races have stood together in unity and with harmony and goodwill. We in the Alliance Government have from the start made our concept of Malaysia clear; indeed our Prime Minister, the Tunku, made the announcement about the establishment of Malaysia at your Association luncheon meeting on May 27th, 1961. He made it clear that our concept of Malaysia is to bring together the peoples of the various territories of Singapore, Sabah, Sarawak, Brunei and Malaya in political and economic cooperation. We wanted them to be brought together so that they would regard the new country Malaysia as the sole object of their loyalty. The Tunku stated that he wanted all our people — Malays, Chinese and others — to regard themselves as Malaysians. This concept of ours is embodied in our Constitution. Our Constitution provides a place for every Malaysian and protects and guarantees his rights and privileges. There is no question of discrimination or dominance of one race against the other under our Constitution. Our Constitution is so drafted that it provides the idea of "GIVE" and not "TAKE", that is to say, it allows us to help the less fortunate of our people, the "HAVE-NOTS", without taking away the rights of the "HAVES". It is true there is a provision in the Con-

stitution giving special position for the natives or Bumiputeras but this is a special provision to meet a special situation and is not intended in any way to provide for supremacy or privilege. In other words, because there is definite economic disparity between the natives and the other Malaysians, the Constitution provides a system of parity in order to correct the economic imbalances.

It is clear in the Constitution, Malaysia is for all Malaysians. Therefore I often wonder why some people have brought out this slogan of Malaysian Malaysia. It may be that they want a Malaysia which is not in accordance with our Constitution which we all agreed to or it may be they want a Malaysia which is not based on the principle of parliamentary democracy and rule of law. As I told the University students of Singapore the other day, at this stage of our progress that all of us must devote our efforts and energy towards building a united Nation, towards strengthening the harmony and goodwill of our people. We must beware of slogans of words, of attempt to create tension, problems or racial differences which do not exist and which have no basis. Our people of various races have lived together in peace and harmony for generations; indeed in Malacca for instance, the Malays, Chinese, Indians, Eurasians and others have lived as a happy and peace-loving people for more than 450 years. This is the natural tendency of our people and it is our duty as responsible leaders to sustain and strengthen this harmony and goodwill so that our people will, in due course, feel themselves as one, as one people and not as members of different communities. This process must necessarily take time because we want to achieve it through democratic process. We should not force their pace but rather to allow this process of uniting our various races together to come about naturally and peacefully. But our objective is clear.

We in the Alliance Government are confident whatever difficulties we have to face now Malaysia will emerge as a strong, happy and united Nation. The natural tendency of our people as I said is to live together in peace and harmony and any attempt to disrupt this peace and harmony will not be supported by the vast majority of our people, because our people are practical and have enough common sense to realise and appreciate where the true interest of the country lies.

Gentlemen, I took time to explain all these although I have done so many a time before in order to illustrate to you my belief and our belief in the Alliance Government that the only solid way to build a Nation is by sure and steady progress linked with patience and understanding. I wish particularly to appeal to foreign correspondents to keep this belief in mind. The tremendous changes, politically, economically and socially have taken place in this Nation in a very short period

of time — changes which in older countries have taken hundreds of years. I have no wish whatever to object to criticism which is fair but I do think that it is right to judge us at all times and in every aspect of the highest standards that may apply elsewhere. We are not God but Man and like all men capable of making mistakes at times. All we ask for is more consideration of the difficulties and dangers that confront Malaysia, and not too much stress on internal differences and opinions which after all occur in every country. This is the way democracy works but the general picture should be viewed as a whole and not in flashes or close-ups which can only result in a disjointed image.

No one can possibly object to statement of facts or fair comments but it is surely reasonable to accept that comments based on facts or personal opinions should be balanced and fair. There are always two sides to a story. There may even be half a dozen. The correspondent who works hard to give all sides to a story is most worthy of respect and performs a valuable service. When difficulties arise it is always found that they spring from reporting that is partial. Naturally those who have other views that are unreported are inclined to object. There was one bad case recently when a correspondent attempted to relate the proposed closure of a bank of China with supplies of rice. No efforts since have been made to find out the facts and figures relating to import and prices or the law relating to banks operated by foreign Governments. I must say so-called stories like this are happily rare but when it does occur it is most unfortunate.

I would also like you all to realise that we are in a state of emergency. Times are not normal in Malaysia today. Our Constitution provides for special powers against subversion and for emergency powers. This is incorporated in the Internal Security Act. The powers are intensive as you probably know but consider this and the fact that we are in times of emergency, the Central Government has been extremely tolerant and restrained and applying its authority. I am mentioning this merely to illustrate that we are in a state of Emergency. Because we have so successfully dealt with the confrontation, some people tend to forget that a state of Emergency does exist. Under emergency there are many additional duties and obligations for citizens and naturally these same duties and obligations apply as do the laws to foreigners travelling or residing or working in this country.

I know that practically all foreign correspondents are based in Singapore as this is the centre of South East Asia. You have to move about and gather events in surrounding countries. I have noted there is every tendency to congregate in Singapore and to cover Malaysia from here. I know you have often visited Sabah and Sarawak quite a lot but generally speaking visits by resident correspondents in Singapore to the States of Malaya are not as frequent. I would like you to know that you are most welcome to Kuala Lumpur our national capital. We would like to see you all as often as it is possible for you to make it.