

THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS ON DADAH USE PREVENTION AND CONTROL
MERLIN HOTEL, KUALA LUMPUR, 2 NOVEMBER 1981

Let me first of all welcome you all to Kuala Lumpur and particularly to this Third International Conference of Non-Governmental Organisations on Dadah Use Prevention and Control.

2. Malaysia, like many other countries, is fully aware of the seriousness and complexity of the global problems of dadah use and substance abuse and we fully endorse all International efforts, be it Governmental or Non-Governmental, directed towards the eradication of this social menace. I am glad that the world community recognises the fact that the problem of dadah use prevention and control is not one that lends itself to easy, simple and instant solutions. There is greater awareness that a nation cannot, and should not remain aloof, unconcerned and uncommitted as the dadah problem is no respecter of geographical, political or physical boundaries. Research findings, I am told, have also revealed that the dadah problem in a sinister way is very democratic in that it does not discriminate against religion, racial descent, or socio-economic background of a person. Youths and members of societies from developed as well as developing countries are subjected to serious risk of dadah abuse. More threatening is the fact that there is indication that the age of initiation to the sub-culture of dadah use and substance abuse is becoming younger and younger, that we have not come up with solutions to cure or rid the dadah dependents of their psychological dependence nor found effective methods to prevent relapse of so-called rehabilitated persons.

3. Malaysia comprehends the magnitude of the dadah problem. We have accordingly designated it as a security problem. Malaysia has advanced this concept for International adoption at the 28th Regular Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs held in Geneva in 1979 as well as The Commonwealth Heads of Government of Asia and Pacific Region held in September, 1980 in New Delhi. We are happy that the 96th Meeting of the United Nation's General Assembly have recognised the growing threat caused by the spread of dadah use, its serious impact on human health, its adverse effects on social development leading to social disintegration and increasing criminality, on economic advancement and national security in a number of countries.

4. It is our hope that the international community will not only accept Malaysia's concept but will also translate it into action so that individually we may solve our own dadah problems and collectively we may eradicate this international scourge which is threatening the resilience of future generations. Insights, understanding and concepts are meaningless and empty unless bold action is taken to ensure results. Indeed, it will be a sad day for all of us if resolutions and recommendations of international conferences, this conference included, do not see the phase of implementation.

5. For us in Malaysia, the dadah problem is still our number one enemy. As a

security problem it will be given priority. Directly the Government has already incurred more than \$100 million for various prevention programmes. What is important is not the amount spent but the result. The Government would extend assistance to Pemadam and other non-Governmental organizations so that we would be able to confront the dadah problem on all fronts. All members of society must necessarily become involved in the battle against dadah. We in the Government will not only assist the non-governmental organizations but also look forward to their efforts in better and effectively complementing and supplementing the Government's efforts. We cannot allow the expression 'everybody's responsibility is no one's concern' to be true of dadah prevention. I am in fact very disturbed by the lax attitude and absence of a sense of urgency of various professions and disciplines who regard the dadah problem as a multi-faceted problem but have argued long and deep over different modalities and which profession or discipline should play the leading role. Collectively, they have not given the problem the priority it deserves when separately if they were confronted with a problem of the magnitude of the 55,000 persons involved they would have certainly declared it as an epidemic and launched immediate measures to control and eradicate it. Dadah is one enemy that we cannot say, "If we cannot fight its abuse, we can join in the abuse."

6. Dadah problem, besides being in itself a problem, is also a symptom of the many underlying current social problems. The break-down in the influence of the family, urban immigration and weakening in religious beliefs and in social and in social norms are some of the problems that underlying social problem, it is likely that the spread of dadah will prevent success. On the other hand, trying to tackle the dadah problem without attending to the underlying problem is likely to prove as unsuccessful.

7. The obvious answer to the problem is to move on a broad front, i.e. to tackle both the underlying and the related dadah problem together. The Government of Malaysia is committed to doing this. And towards the objective of ridding this country of dadah use and substance abuse, the Government will not tolerate petty jealousies between groups or professions.

8. Asean Countries who are both the source and the bearer of the brunt of the international dadah problem merits greater attention of the world community. It is in the interest of the world community not merely to assist us in the field of supply reduction but also in the area of demand reduction. The world will reap a bonus if the dadah problem in the ASEAN region is reduced, if not wiped out.

Ladies and gentlemen.

9. It is my sincere hope that you who represent the non-governmental organizations in your own country will be able to derive benefits from your attendance at this Conference and that you will contribute your efforts to your own programmes, your country's programmes as well as the overall programmes of the International Community. In short, for the sake of future generations, we all have to respond actively, positively and urgently to overcome the dadah problem.

10. With this hope I declare this Third International Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations on Dadah Use Prevention and Control opened.

Thank you.