

THE 3RD ASEAN ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

THE CROWN PRINCESS HOTEL, KUALA LUMPUR, 22 JULY 1994

I wish to thank the organisers, the Asean Institute, for inviting my wife and I, to this Third Asean Achievement Award tonight. To the winners, my heartiest congratulations to you. Your success tonight is a recognition of your contributions to your community specifically, and the region generally. The initiative to honour outstanding individuals from the various disciplines, including medicine, architecture, Research and Development and education, is indeed commendable.

2. I understand that the Asean Institute is one of the largest regional private business organisations, dedicated to boosting Asean trade in addition to enhancing the cohesiveness of the Asean community.

3. We in Asean have enjoyed not only peace and stability but have also witnessed an era of strong economic growth throughout the region. Given these trends the next century could well go down in history as the golden age of ASEAN. However, for this to happen we must make concerted efforts to address a number of problems confronting us in the advancement of Asean as a strong and cohesive grouping.

4. While it is true that the economic performance of the individual Asean countries has been commendable many problems remain unresolved. Pockets of poverty are found in many ASEAN countries and positive actions must be taken to redress the imbalances between the haves and the many have-nots. In addition, more attention should be given to improving health care, and to raising the educational standards of our peoples. Without good health and education progress becomes difficult.

5. In fact the premium placed on good education could not be over-emphasised. We must continue to invest in education in a world where new knowledge grows by geometrical progression. There is less need to go abroad now as our local educational institutions are more credible and they provide a wider range of courses to choose from. ASEAN countries should open up their educational institutions to each other.

6. ASEAN's success seems to draw some unwelcome attention. Efforts are being made to slow down its development through the imposition of foreign standards. ASEAN countries must stand together if they are going to counter this unhealthy move.

7. To build a cohesive ASEAN community, we need not focus on political or military alliances. Trade and cultural ties can be just as effective in fostering greater ASEAN solidarity. We

should therefore work towards becoming economically and technologically a single community, i.e. sharing our expertise, experiences and thoughts so that the benefits could be shared between us.

8. The making of an ASEAN community is a matter which must receive more attention. Towards this end a variety of programmes, both social and educational, should be developed to forge closer ties between our countries. This is especially important among the youth of ASEAN, the people who will carry on the tradition and give substance to the ASEAN spirit. More exchange programmes between young people should be encouraged as this will provide them with a better insight into each other's way of life.

9. In this context, I am impressed by the Asean Business Forum which was created specifically as a private sector initiative and that for the past three years it has been able to generate hundreds of millions of dollars as a result of new joint-ventures between its members. This has definitely boosted intra-ASEAN trade.

10. I am also pleased to note that there are more than 40 Malaysian companies which are members of this Forum. As the private sector will always be the engine of growth it is imperative that it continually initiates ideas, innovations and approaches which can be commercially developed for the mutual benefit of entrepreneurs and consumers in the Asean region.

11. Governments can provide the necessary political, security and infrastructure framework but at the end of the day it is the businessmen who have to exploit the commercial opportunities that abound in this region.

12. I find it refreshing to note that the Forum, despite the strong emphasis on business activities, has included outstanding pre-university students at each of its annual banquets. These are but some of the strategies that must be followed through to ensure the success of our programme to train the young.

13. I find this exercise to honour individuals from the various disciplines a noble undertaking. That there is a group within ASEAN who are concerned with the young and who believes that students who excel in their respective discipline should be given regional and international recognition is indeed commendable. To provide motivation for the young to excel is one way to encourage professionalism.

14. Of all our resources, our greatest asset is said to be our people. But if people are to be assets for nations they must have skills, good values and a sense of responsibility. No nation can do well if the people are ill-educated and ill-trained and given to all kinds of disruptive activities. The development of a culture that is compatible with growth and development must be regarded as a priority for all ASEAN countries.

15. Our Asian values have been our strength and we should take all possible measures to ensure that these values are deeply ingrained in our society for generations to come. Without this strong sense of commitment to the community, family and nation, our efforts to catch up with the developed nation will end in failure.

16. We must relentlessly help to upgrade the well-being of our family, our community and our country. Collectively it will help to realise the ASEAN dream of a prosperous and peaceful South East Asia.

Thank you.