

**THE OCCASION OF THE CONFERMENT OF THE JAWAHARLAL NEHRU
AWARD FOR INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING FOR 1994**
NEW DELHI, INDIA, 20 DECEMBER 1996

It is a great honour and privilege for me to be here today to accept this prestigious Award that the Government and people of India have conferred upon me. This is a proud moment that I will long cherish and treasure. As I looked at the distinguished names of those who have been honoured before me, I am apprehensive at the thought of living up to the high expectations that this Award represents. It is even more daunting when this Award is given in the name of a great leader, philosopher and statesman, such as Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. In accepting the Award, I will endeavour to pursue and promote the ideals associated with this outstanding Statesman.

2. Jawaharlal Nehru, an illustrious son of India, was no stranger to my part of the world. His philosophy and ideals inspired and moulded the thinking of many leaders of the time. His vision of freedom and the well-being of nations inculcated a sense of pride and dignity among mankind that paved the way for the birth of nationalism in Asia. His determination to carry India into the modern age of scientific discovery and technological development is still being emulated by many of us in Asia. His courage to inculcate and impart modern values and culture, five decades ago, in an environment steeped in traditions and conservatism, is still being fought for by many of us.

3. Most of all, Nehru lived and fought for an end to colonialism, for freedom and for equality of mankind, for mutual respect and the sovereignty of nations, non-interference in the internal affairs and for peaceful co-existence among nations. His ideals and philosophy inspired millions beyond the shores of India to struggle to free themselves from the clutches of colonialism and imperialism.

4. Five decades have now passed. We are now free from the stranglehold of the old colonialism and we are free to shape our own destiny. However, as we intensify our efforts to develop our economy and bring prosperity to our people, we are continuously hampered by new obstacles that restrict our march towards progress and economic advancement. Today, we, in what Nehru termed as the Third World, are still faced with deliberate obstacles thrown in the way of our progress and our advancement towards higher socio-economic status. New issues are constantly being introduced to keep us as dependent as we were when we were colonies. Thus the few competitive advantages that we have are being assailed while the major advantages that the developed countries have, such as patent rights, know-how, capital, huge domestic markets, etc may not be touched at all. And we are now told that the little protection that we accord our own industries must be removed in the name of free and borderless trade.

5. Environment conditionalities are being used as a weapon to deprive developing countries from exploiting their natural resources. Yet in my country at least huge tracts of forests were cleared during the colonial days in order to plant rubber and mine for tin. We have since independence been much more careful in extracting timber from our forests. Today, fully 50 percent of Malaysia is still

forested while another 20 percent is covered with tree plantations. Yet our people are being told to remain primitive, hunting with blowpipes, because that is our way of life and we must stay with it. When Sukarno, a contemporary of Pandit Nehru, coined the word Neo-colonialism, we thought he was being rhetorical. Now we know he knew better. What we are experiencing now is indeed a new form of colonialism, more insidious than open colonialism.

6. We have not seen the end. As the developing countries continue to progress and increase their share in world trade, there will be more hurdles, rules and conditions to frustrate and prevent us from achieving our goals. We can no longer depend on the generosity and goodwill of the more advanced members of the international community to solve our problems and assist us in our economic development. The developing countries themselves need to unite and speak with one voice to secure our place in the global market.

7. We shall continue our relations with the North, but we should ensure that we are not dominated by them or be too dependent on them. For this there is a need for the countries of the South to work together. If it is worthwhile for the North to trade and invest in the South, then the South must have something worthwhile to offer. It is time that we in the South look at each other and identify areas for cooperation and trade. Once, there were many things which only the North were capable of. But now we in the South have acquired much of this capacity. And these include trade and investments. It is time that we look towards the South in our quest for new trade and investments. Surely there must be room in the South for both the North and the South.

8. The Group of 15 countries of the South has now been established. In the short time of its existence there has been a greater flow of information between them and between other developing countries. This is important because lack of information about each other's resources and capabilities was what prevented us from interacting economically with each other. Now we are seeing more trade and investment between the countries of the South than ever before. They are still small but a beginning has been made. There can be no doubt that with better knowledge of each other, better communication, shipping and flights, trade and investment between the countries of the South will increase. We should not be deterred by the slow progress. There can be no doubt that if we persevere trade and investments between the countries of the South will become a part of our economic scene. Then we would become less dependent on the North. We would add more meaning to our freedom and independence.

9. Pandit Nehru, the teacher, taught us that cooperation among mankind and nations is essential to peace and harmony and that a world of haves and have-nots will never be at peace with itself. It is imperative that developing countries intensify cooperation among ourselves. We should concentrate and build on our similarities and complementarities rather than highlight our differences and divisions. We should be more forthcoming in sharing our expertise and technological know-how rather than harp on our inadequacies. We should provide opportunities and facilities for the development and promotion of trade and investment so as to create a real bridge to effective and productive

cooperation among us. Most of all, we must stand together to articulate our concerns and exercise our rights to a fair and just trading environment. For only when we achieve economic strength can we be truly independent.

10. Pandit Nehru could not have done more. He instilled pride and dignity to our struggle for freedom and taught us that cooperation is the key to peace and prosperity. He inspired the developing countries to unite into a cohesive third force to protect and project their interests in the international arena and he devoted his life to the cause of world peace and understanding. Indeed, it is through his tireless efforts that the voice of the developing countries like Malaysia and India are today heard and given due cognizance. The institution of the Non-Aligned Movement of which India was a founding member, is instrumental in voicing and advancing the interests of developing countries. This is but one lasting legacy of Nehru's many achievements.

11. 'The Teacher' has laid a firm foundation for us to build on. Let us honour his memory by working together for a better future for our peoples and for all mankind.