

SPEECH BY: DATO' SERI DR. MAHATHIR BIN MOHAMAD
(PRIME MINISTER)

EVENT: AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 20TH. CONVENTION OF
THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF ASIAN AND PACIFIC CONTRACTORS
ASSOCIATIONS (IFAWPCA)

VENUE: HILTON HOTEL, KUALA LUMPUR

DATE: 25 JUL 1983

TIME:

Mr. Chairman;
Honoured guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is a great honour for me to be given this opportunity to address this important international gathering of prominent builders and contractors, and I take this opportunity to congratulate the organisers of the Convention for their untiring efforts in making all the preparations.

2. As I am made to understand, this 20th. Convention of the International Federation of Asian and Western Pacific Contractors Associations (IFAWPCA) is the first to be held in Malaysia. The presence of many members of IFAWPCA's counterpart organizations from all over the world, indicates the importance of your meeting. This is indeed a great particularly those of you who are from distant places - with 'Selamat Datang,' and I wish you all a pleasant and enjoyable stay in Malaysia.

3. I note that the Federation is not only concerned with the exchange of information on construction technology, but also in fostering healthy relationship between the government and the contractors, with a view to finding mutually beneficial solutions to problems. These are also our concern in Malaysia. Malaysia gives a high priority to the transfer of technology, and we hope that our construction industry, which is a very important sector, will not only benefit from this policy but also contribute to its success. Transfer of technology is not an easy process; it cannot be easily achieved unless there is genuine and sincere efforts, particularly on the part of the transferor, to do so. The transferor too must assist the transferee to make the necessary preparation to enable a smooth and effective transfer to take place. Rigidity and selfishness on the part of the technologically advanced construction establishments can stifle the construction industry in the long run, and in turn can affect the technologically advanced establishments.

4. We are aware that builders and contractors have an

important contribution to make to the development process of any country, socially and economically. They have a part in physically translating the development plans into reality. But development is not just physical construction and concrete contours; development is a better quality of life for all. The challenge to the construction industry is therefore the challenge at its response and reaction to the needs and problems of society.

5. A major bulk of development projects in the various sectors, whether public or private, involves the construction industry. Given its importance, it is imperative for the construction industry to achieve, and ensure a high level of efficiency and productivity, not only in order that builders and contractors can complete construction contracts within shorter period of time, and at lesser costs, but also in giving due regard to safety, the aesthetic aspects and the ecology which constitute much of the basic ingredients of a better quality of life.

6. The Government is the largest single employer of builders and contractors in construction contracts and, therefore, it is understandable why it is concerned with the efficiency and productivity of the construction industry. The Government stands to gain if the construction industry is effective, efficient and reliable. And when the Government gains, the people too will gain.

7. With the increase in the scope and magnitude of construction projects, coupled with the rapid advancement in the science and technology of construction, the process of complex and complicated. Qualified personnel and skilled workers, are an asset. Prudent and effective utilization of resources through modern management practices, can ensure not only success but also benefits to all the parties concerned.

8. Just as the theme of your Convention suggests, construction industry is a critical sector for economic growth. But economic growth, just as I have mentioned earlier, is not all that we are concerned with. We want growth, but we also want a better life, which is beyond mere growth. I believe that a strong, efficient and reliable construction industry can assist the country not only to achieve economic growth effectively, but also to assist in moulding a better environment for a healthy growth of the members of our society, spiritually and physically.

9. Today, when we speak of the construction industry we refer more and more to the capability to affect a total face lift of a metropolitan area. One can only look at the Klang Valley here to see the transformation that has taken place, particularly since the last decade. But, with rapid development, greater efforts must be made to ensure that our surroundings are clean and beautiful. Concrete all around, without cleanliness and beautification will render the environment drab and depressing. Cleanliness and

beautification does not mean elaborate and expensive landscaping and rock gardens; even big healthy trees properly dispersed together with green grassy patches which break the greyness of concrete and bitumen, free from waste paper and plastics can turn a city into a garden. Man and the waste he creates is the greatest menace to the environment. Man the builder, must design buildings and the environment to contain this menace.

10. The Government cannot do everything in this regard. I hope, in the case of Malaysia, the developers, the contractors, and the owners of factories and office premises would jointly help the Government and its agencies in implementing the cleanliness and beautification programme. It is not enough for us to do this for display; we must do it because we want to live, and enjoy living, in a clean and beautiful surroundings.

11. I understand IFAWPCA is a constituent member of the Confederation of International Contractors Association (CICA), a world-wide body of contractors' associations, which has under its wings also the International European Construction Federation (FIEC), the Inter-American Federation of the Construction Industry (FIIC) and the Associated General Contractors' of America (AGCA). I suppose whilst IFAWPCA can directly assist builders and contractors in the Asian and Western Pacific region to achieve further development and growth, it can through CICA exchange views on common problems in the construction industry and possibly through joint efforts find solutions.

12. I wish you all and your 20th Convention every success and may your stay in Malaysia be a pleasant and memorable one. With this I have pleasure in declaring your Convention open.