

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

EVENT: THE OPENING OF THE 3RD INTERNATIONAL COMBINED
SCIENTIFIC MEETING ORGANISED BY THE COLLEGES
OF GENERAL PRACTITIONERS, PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS OF MALAYSIA

VENUE: THE HILTON HOTEL, KUALA LUMPUR

DATE: 28 JUL 1988

TIME:

Yang Berbahagia Dato' Dr. S. Selvarajah,
Pengerusi Jawatankuasa Pengelola;
Dif-dif Kehormat;
Tuan-tuan dan puan-puan sekalian.
Saya mengucapkan terima kasih kepada Jawatankuasa
Penganjur Mesyuarat Antarabangsa Saintifik Bersama Yang
Ketiga ini kerana menjemput saya untuk merasmikan Mesyuarat
ini. Saya berharap Mesyuarat ini bukan sahaja akan memberi
manfaat kepada tuan-tuan dan puan-puan dalam bidang
perubatan, tetapi juga akhirnya akan memberi sumbangan
kepada kesejahteraan penduduk negara ini.

2. Negara kita masih mengalami kekurangan pakar-pakar
perubatan. Kerajaan akan terus memberi perhatian supaya
bilangan pakar di dalam berbagai bidang perubatan di negara
ini meningkat dari masa ke masa. Latihan perubatan di
peringkat ijazah lanjutan, atau post-graduate, di
institusi-institusi tempatan telah dipergiat dan
diperluaskan supaya kita dapat menambah bilangan pakar
perubatan di negara ini. Di samping itu Kerajaan menghargai
apa-apa usaha oleh pertubuhan-pertubuhan perubatan, seperti
ketiga-tiga Kolej ini dan institusi-institusi swasta, bagi
meningkatkan pengetahuan dan kemahiran para doktor kita.

3. Kerajaan menyedari pentingnya para doktor dan
kakitangan perubatan lain mengikuti
perkembangan-perkembangan terbaru dalam berbagai bidang
perubatan. Perkembangan dan kemajuan dalam semua bidang
perubatan ini sangatlah dinamik. Kalaulah tidak setiap
hari, setiap minggu seharusnya kita dapat mendengar penemuan
dan penyelidikan baru. Dengan itu semua doktor dan
kakitangan perubatan hendaklah sentiasa berusaha
meningkatkan ilmu pengetahuan masing-masing, bukan sahaja
supaya tidak ketinggalan bahkan supaya dapat meningkatkan
mutu perkhidmatan perubatan di negara ini.

Tuan-tuan dan puan-puan,

4. Penceramah-penceramah jempunan ramai terdiri daripada
pakar-pakar luar negeri yang akan mencurahkan
sedikit-sebanyak pengetahuan dan kemahiran mereka di

perjumpaan yang bermakna ini. Dengan itu, seterusnya saya ingin berucap dalam Bahasa Inggeris.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

5. I would like to express my appreciation to the Organising Committee for inviting me to officiate the opening of this 3rd International Combined Scientific Meeting of the Colleges of General Practitioners, Physicians and Surgeons of Malaysia. I take this opportunity to welcome our guests from overseas and I hope you will find your stay in Malaysia both enjoyable and fruitful. I am glad to be associated with both the second and present third Meeting of the Malaysian medical profession.

6. It is a long time since I was involved in the practice of medicine. And now because of the nature of my job, I am permitted only a passing interest in the progress of medicine. Nevertheless, today both my wife and I feel we are amongst colleagues and friends including many very old ones.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

7. Malaysia is fortunate to have a comprehensive network of hospitals, polyclinics and health centres through which healthcare can be extended to all levels of our society, free in most cases and at a subsidised rate for others. Efforts in the past three decades have resulted in a more equitable distribution of facilities and services and general improvement of the health status of the people as reflected by positive changes in health indicators. The pattern of diseases in Malaysia has been changing to reflect the degree of affluence which now approaches those of developed countries. As infectious diseases are controlled, heart diseases, malignancy and accidents are assuming greater importance as causes of ill-health and mortality. Similarly conditions related to an increasingly aging population, urbanisation and issues related to personal behaviour can be expected to pose increasing problems in the future. To meet these and new emerging needs as well as the residue of traditional problems, our approach must necessarily be innovative, multi-disciplined and multi sectoral.

8. There have been rapid advances made in the field of medicine. Over the last 20 years great strides have been made in medical technology. Advances in biomedical engineering have resulted in the development of highly sophisticated equipments. These developments have increased our diagnostic and therapeutic capabilities to deal with a wide spectrum of diseases and invariably these advances have caught the imagination of the medical profession as well as the public.

9. This has resulted in increasing the expectations and demands from the public for the introduction of new

capabilities. Cost of medical care in general, in most countries including Malaysia, has escalated over the years. This has been brought about to a large extent by the high cost of high-tech medical equipments used in diagnosis and treatment and the increasingly sophisticated management of patients.

10. This trend of rising costs in medical care is of concern to all of us and especially to the Government of Malaysia which maintains a non-contributory comprehensive medical service. There is a need for a degree of centralisation of the means of diagnosing in particular so that expensive equipments can be more fully utilised and thus decreasing the financial burden on the patient. As doctors have no time for management, medical facilities should have professional managers skillful in increasing productivity i.e. in reducing costs.

11. Malaysia inherited a colonial health service designed originally to provide free healthcare for expatriate officers. When medicine costs 10 cents a bottle, the extension of this free service to all Government employees and then to the general public was not considered much of a burden on the Government. But today when one capsule may cost \$3.00 and an operation thousands of dollars, the burden has become quite unbearable. Without denying the needy access to good healthcare, it is necessary that some contributory health insurance scheme should be instituted for those who can afford it. As the Employees Provident Fund has shown, vast sums of money can be accumulated by an insurance scheme to maintain facilities and provide healthcare for vast numbers of contributors. Such funds can easily keep up with the sophistication and costs of modern medicine. Indeed, such funds can contribute towards the total national savings, a factor of great importance in economic development and the creation of a better quality of life for all. Doctors, especially the newer ones, are keen to have the very latest equipments regardless of the cost. A non-contributory medical service even by the richest Governments cannot meet the demands of these doctors indefinitely. We are aware that they are only thinking of their patients but Governments have other priorities as well. The time has come for the nation to think seriously of a general health insurance scheme to supplement and eventually partially replace the Government Medical Services.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

12. The government has always placed great emphasis in continuing medical education. Government hospitals have been encouraged to organise educational programs for their staff. Doctors have been sponsored to attend conferences, seminars and specialised courses conducted both locally and abroad. This is to enable them to improve their knowledge and skills which they can utilise more effectively in carrying out their clinical responsibilities.

13. In their profession, doctors have an obligation to continue their education which is life long, and all doctors must take personal responsibility to ensure their own continuing medical education. In these days of specialisation continuing medical education poses a challenge to doctors, and medical gatherings such as this Combined Meeting can contribute towards this. Professional medical societies should work closer together with the Ministry of Health, hospitals and the Universities, with the common objective of promoting continuing medical education for the benefit of patients and the public.

Tuan-tuan dan Puan-puan sekalian,

14. Adalah diharapkan Mesyuarat Ketiga-tiga Kolej Perubatan ini akan berjaya meningkatkan ilmu pengetahuan dan kemahiran para doktor di negara ini. Rakyat negara ini turut berasa bangga dengan berita-berita mengenai kejayaan-kejayaan oleh pakar-pakar perubatan kita dalam mengendalikan pembedahan yang dahulu dilakukan hanya di luar negeri. Kita juga turut berbangga dengan beberapa kejayaan dalam penyelidikan perubatan yang dijalankan oleh pakar-pakar tempatan. Saya yakin kita akan menempa banyak lagi kejayaan masa depan berkat usaha-usaha yang berterusan dari semua pihak.

15. Akhir sekali, saya mengucapkan terima kasih sekali lagi kepada Jawatankuasa Penganjur Mesyuarat Antarabangsa ini kerana menjemput saya berucap di Upacaraya ini. Dengan ini saya dengan sukacitanya membuka Mesyuarat Antarabangsa Sainifik Bersama Yang Ketiga ini dengan rasminya.