

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

EVENT: THE EAST ASIA AND PACIFIC REGIONAL NARCOTICS CONFERENCE

VENUE: THE SHANGRI-LA HOTEL KUALA LUMPUR

DATE: 14 MAR 1988

TIME:

His Excellency

Mr. John Monjo;

Excellencies;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

First and foremost I would like to extend the greetings of His Excellency Dato Seri Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia to all present. His Excellency also extend his appologies for not being able to be present with you all today in this occasion and has requested me to deliver you his address.

I would like to thank the organisers for inviting me to address this East Asia and Pacific Regional Narcotics Conference for United States officials. I understand that this meeting brings together, for the second time in Malaysia, United States officials dealing in drug matters from the East Asia and Pacific region with officials from Washington to exchange information on drug policies, issues and trends. I wish you 'Selamat Datang' to Malaysia.

2. Drug abuse and illicit trafficking in drugs are amongst the greatest threats to mankind today. When abused, narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances become a force of evil and destroy the lives of thousands of individuals and jeopardise the security and stability of nations. Drug addiction and illicit trafficking continue to spread worldwide and almost every country in the world suffers a broad range of tragic consequences from drug abuse.

3. It is imperative that we take prompt and decisive actions to eliminate drug abuse and illicit trafficking from within our midst. For the campaign to be really successful it will require global action and the cooperation of all countries to coordinate a comprehensive strategy to eliminate this deadly menace. All countries will have to close rank and work together. The war against drugs has to be a total war. Many countries have come to realise this as borne by their presence at the International Conference on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking (ICDAIT) held in Vienna last June.

4. ICDAIT has brought together 138 nations and 173 specialised agencies and non-governmental organisations,

determined to commit themselves to reducing and eventually eradicating drug abuse and illicit trafficking. ICDAIT agreed that vigorous and cohesive action by all governments and international organisations was required on all fronts to attain this goal. The Declaration adopted by the Conference is a clear expression of our collective political will and commitment to respond to the drug menace. It underlines a shared responsibility to provide appropriate response and resources to combat drug abuse and illicit trafficking. This Declaration also provides strong encouragement to all countries to reinforce and give priority to the anti-drug drive. Subsequent to ICDAIT, I am happy to note that many countries are becoming more serious in their efforts to reduce the production, supply of and demand for drugs and to curb illicit trafficking, both at national and international levels.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

5. There is growing acknowledgement among countries that crop substitution must finally lead to crop eradication and elimination. I feel that this process needs to be speeded up. Countries producing narcotic drugs cannot and should not be tardy. This is where the United States of America and other developed countries who are major donors for rural development or crop substitution in producing countries should ensure that eradication targets are met. Further financial assistance to producing countries should be conditional upon adherence to an agreed time schedule for crop eradication.

6. Together with this, an effective crop eradication programme would require an evaluation of the project area to determine the success of the programme. It also requires policing of areas where crops have been destroyed and substituted to ensure that there is no illegal replanting of poppy, coca or cannabis. In this regard we may consider the possibility of establishing a United Nations Force to work together with producing countries in the eradication or destruction of the crop and the policing of the area; or assisting producing countries to strengthen policing and enforcement capabilities in crop substitution areas to prevent replanting. Your field officers should be very critical in their assessment of such projects. Only with determination can we succeed in crop eradication which is an important element in supply reduction.

7. Cross border problems make production, manufacturing and trafficking of opiates and its derivatives in this region more difficult to control. I am sure the United States Government is facing similar problems and may in fact be seeking new forms of cooperation with and among bordering countries in producing areas. The strengthening of mutual cooperation among countries in the suppression of illicit trafficking in drugs and other controlled substances through land-locked contiguous borders may also take the

form of hot pursuits. Countries with contiguous borders when contacted for assistance in hot pursuits could render such assistance without delay and in an expeditious manner.

8. In view of the increasing audacity of drug barons Malaysia welcomes the effort towards an early negotiation of the Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances to supplement the two existing Conventions on drugs. Let us not slacken in our resolve to produce a strong and effective instrument to deal with them. Recognising the trans-national dimensions of illicit trafficking and the impunity with which traffickers operate across borders, let us act responsively and decisively to deny safe havens for traffickers and their unlawfully acquired assets and properties. In this regard the Malaysian Parliament is deliberating a Bill to provide for the forfeiture of instrumentalities, proceeds and properties derived from illicit trafficking of drugs as well as a comprehensive scheme for providing legal assistance to requesting countries. Another measure that has proven to be successful in Malaysia and other countries is the deprivation of travel documents, passports and passes of suspected or convicted drug traffickers.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

9. Malaysia began the war against heroin in the early 1970s. We have, since 1983, undertaken a national Anti-Drug Campaign and formulated an Anti-Drug Action Plan. Our aggressive anti-drug efforts following this campaign has resulted in a decrease in the incidence rate from 14,624 persons in 1983 to 7,596 persons in 1987. There has also been a decrease in the number of foreign nationals apprehended in Malaysia for drug trafficking. This decrease could be attributed to the strict enforcement of our drug laws and our primary prevention efforts.

10. In Malaysia, experience has taught us that in order to effectively counter the drug problem action must be taken in a coordinated and integrated manner. The political leadership has to work in tandem with the administrative and judicial system in the country. There has to be clear definition of roles and responsibilities among and between government agencies, non-governmental organisations and the community. Differing values and attitudes towards dependent-producing drugs and substances should not divert us from pursuing a tough policy on addiction and trafficking.

11. In line with the Comprehensive Multidisciplinary Outline (CMO) adopted by ICDAIT, Malaysia is of the view that future actions in drug abuse control and prevention should encompass every aspect of the problem including primary prevention, rehabilitation, legislation and enforcement, manpower development, research and evaluation and international collaboration and co-ordination. In

consideration of the fact that the production and availability of illicit drugs cannot be eliminated through enforcement measures alone equal if not higher priority, has to be accorded to the intensification of efforts in the field of primary prevention and also rehabilitation.

12. A wider framework of action giving greater weightage to demand reduction would be called for. Major consuming countries should look into the problem of demand for drugs as reduced demand will stifle supply. Therefore, there is need for a multi-pronged approach to this complex problem. Strategies and programmes need to be innovative and scrupulously enforced and adhered to.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

13. This annual gathering of United States Officials dealing with drug matters in the East Asia and Pacific region will certainly strengthen existing efforts to combat the drug menace internationally. The opportunity to work together for a common good should not be allowed to slip by. I am sure that these meetings have contributed towards fostering closer relations between countries in the East Asia and Pacific region and the United States of America.

14. Malaysia and the United States have for some years now worked very closely in the drug field both at bilateral and multilateral levels. I sincerely hope that our joint and uncompromising efforts would contribute towards curbing drug production, abuse and illicit trafficking in our respective regions.

15. I wish you every success in your deliberations during the next three days.
Thank you.