

SPEECH BY WIFE OF
THE PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA
DATO SERI DATIN PADUKA
DR. SITI HASMAH BTE HJ. MOHD. ALI
AT THE DINNER IN HONOUR OF MRS. NANCY REAGAN
THE WIFE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE U.S.A.
AT SRI PERDANA, KUALA LUMPUR
ON FRIDAY, 2ND. MAY, 1986
AT 8.00 P.M.

Mrs. Nancy Reagan;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is an honour and pleasure for me to welcome our very distinguished guest tonight. May I on behalf of the Government and people of Malaysia extend to you and your delegation, Mrs. Reagan, a very warm welcome to our country. We also like to thank you for making this 24 hour jet-stop in Kuala Lumpur possible.

2. As you are aware Malaysia played host to the 35th. Annual Pacific Asia Travel Association Conference or PATA less than 3 weeks ago. More than 2,500 delegates, the biggest PATA gathering were here. We are still jubilant of its success and are also still in a celebrating mood. The theme song 'To know Malaysia is to love Malaysia¹ was composed by Carol Connors from the United States after a brief stay in Malaysia. Since then, she has come here again and again.

3. Your visit to Kuala Lumpur is so brief. Nevertheless, we are grateful and hope that apart from the main objectives

of your visit here you will still be able to see some of our cultural and historical heritage tomorrow.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

4. My first encounter, indeed of a special kind, with Mrs. Reagan was in January 1984. Though it was wintering cold outside, the atmosphere inside the White House was warm and friendly. We found our conversation going towards the global problem of drug abuse particularly among adolescents and youths. We had so much to talk and to listen that my delegation overstayed the courtesy of Mrs. Reagan.

5. The second encounter of the first kind was in April 1985, again in Washington. This time we had not only more occasion to listen and discuss the drug problem with Mrs. Reagan, but also was given the opportunity to meet with the First Ladies of other countries facing similar problems. I wish to reiterate Malaysia's and my warm congratulations to you, Mrs. Reagan, for your initiative and interest in inviting us all to attend the First Ladies Conference on Drug Abuse in Washington and in Atlanta, Georgia, in April 1985 and again in October 1985 for the 2nd Conference in New York. These Conferences were very special to us as mothers. We share your deep concern on the problems of your youth. We have more than 15,000 Malaysian youths in the United States and we therefore also share your concern.

6. The global situation relating to the problem of drug abuse is growing grimmer by the day. Ilicit drug abuse and trafficking is rapidly turning into a problem of international global dimensions, one that respects no political, geographical or ideological boundaries. Drug abuse and trafficking destroys the economy of countries and the social fabric of societies.

7. Malaysia welcomes the convening of the International Conference on Drugs to be held in Vienna in June 1987. At the time when the dangers of the problem are affecting the growing number of countries, the conference will serve as a timely opportunity for the international community to take greater action against the problem.

8. Nowadays it is no longer easy to distinguish between a source country and a consuming country. Where drugs are produced and trafficked, there probably will be drug abuse. We have seen this throughout the world. Many producing countries have become 'victim' nations themselves.

9. In Malaysia, heroin is the main drug of abuse. The drug problem is made worse by our close proximity to the opium producing areas, the 'Golden Triangle'. Our geographical location, good infrastructure and communication system makes Malaysia an ideal transit country for the flow and trafficking of drugs into and out of this country. We are an exposed country, having a long coast line and sharing common borders with all our five ASEAN neighbours. Some of the illicit drugs smuggled in on transit have been diverted to create and meet local demand.

10. The uncontrolled misuse of drugs would definitely sap the energy of the Country -- our youths and our economy -- and endangers our security. We can ill afford to sacrifice the future of our young generation. It has been found that 63% of drug users in Malaysia are in the age group of 20-26 years. For Malaysia to grow and prosper, for us to achieve our aspirations for our children and grand children, more importantly, for us to preserve the bondage and unity between parents and children, the evil menace of drug abuse has to be stopped and prevented.

11. I will not deal with the details of our Government's effort, as you will be briefed about this tomorrow morning. Nevertheless, I would like to state that Malaysia

has made all efforts and will continue to do so to combat drug abuse. The Government has now formulated a National Anti Narcotics Action Plan in which our priority has shifted from enforcement efforts to greater emphasis on preventive efforts. The aim is to isolate our youths from the clutches of drug peddlars and to protect school children from the lure of drugs.

12. In this respect, we have emphasised that the war against drug is everybody's responsibility and that the community plays a major role in supporting the Government by determining their roles and actions. Each sector of the community has been given information and guidelines.

13. In October, 1985, a National Conference on Parents Involvement in the Prevention of Drug Abuse was convened to create awareness and to discuss the drug problem. The post-conference workshops and seminars were encouragingly initiated by the women's and youth's organisations that participated. A week ago, heads of Ministries, Government Departments and State Governments held a two-day workshop concerning the involvement of members of the Public Services and their families in the Prevention of Drug Abuse. It was the first and biggest gathering of senior Government Officials with their wives. There will be more seminars and workshops to come. I am confident that when parents and youths, members of the Public Services and every sector of the community were to join hands positively, we shall, God willing, succeed.

Mrs. Reagan,

14. Your visit to Malaysia is an encouragement to mothers and parents here. We love our children and our country just as you and mothers all over the world do. It is with deep appreciation therefore that we welcome you here to share our experiences and ideas. Again, I regret that your stay is so

short but I hope, like Carol Connors, you will have a good picture of Malaysia despite the drug problem, and would come again someday.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

15. May I now invite you all to join me in a toast to the good health of Mrs. Reagan and members of her delegation.

Thank you.
