

**UCAPAN PERDANA MENTERI DI PEMBUKAAN RASMI
MESYUARAT PERWAKILAN TAHUNAN MCA, DI
FEDERAL HOTEL, KUALA LUMPUR PADA
8 SEPTEMBER 1979.**

Yang Berhormat Dato Pengerusi Persidangan, Yang Berhormat Dato Lee San Choon, Presiden MCA, Yang Amat Berbahagia Timbalan Perdana Menteri, Yang Amat Berbahagia Tun Tan Siew Sin, Yang Amat Berbahagia Tun Omar Ong Yoke Lin, Ahli-ahli Jawatankuasa Pusat MCA, Ketua-Ketua dan Wakil-wakil Parti Anggota Barisan Nasional, Para Perwakilan dan Pemerhati sekalian.

Saya mengucapkan berbanyak terima kasih serta penghargaan kepada MCA kerana sudi menjemput saya dan seterusnya memberi penghormatan kepada saya merasmikan Persidangan Perwakilan Tahunan MCA yang ke 27. Ini merupakan kali yang ke empat saya merasmikan Persidangan Tahunan MCA sejak saya memegang pucuk pimpinan Barisan Nasional dan Kerajaan.

Persidangan Tahunan MCA kali ini memanglah penting. Di samping pemilihan pucuk pimpinan yang dilakukan pada tiap-tiap dua tahun sekali, para perwakilan akan juga berpeluang membincangkan beberapa perkara penting yang melibatkan masa depan rakyat dan negara.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Every annual delegates' meeting of a component party in the Barisan Nasional creates interest in the country. It is quite natural because it is one of the ruling parties in the government of the country. Today's meeting of the MCA has created more interest for the reasons that we all already know. The other component parties are neutral observers. Whatever may be the result, they sincerely hope that the MCA will close ranks again and is united to play its constructive role in the Barisan Nasional. As regards myself, I wish I had not been invited to open this meeting. However, I would like to thank the MCA for the honour and as usual will confine my address to matters affecting the Barisan Nasional and the nation.

Just over a week ago we celebrated our country's 22nd year of independence. In my message to the nation I asked that we pause for a while to reflect on the past and ponder on the future. I also posed

a number of questions for us to give thought to. I think that message is equally pertinent when I address you all today.

Over the past twenty-two years, we have worked hard to strengthen the foundations of our nation and to improve the quality of life of our people. Our nation's successes all these years have been due mainly to the close cooperation and understanding among the major communities under the leadership of UMNO, MCA, MIC and the other component parties of the Barisan Nasional. We have fought together for independence; we still share the same vision for the country; and whether we like it or not, our destinies are inextricably bound together.

Because of cooperation, our nation has survived and prospered. We always consult one another, and act after having obtained consensus. Consultation and consensus are the only means that take into account the realities of a multi racial society.

The process of consultation and the spirit of consensus have been the basis of the Alliance and now, the Barisan Nasional. In a multi racial society we cannot avoid conflicts. But through the Barisan Nasional we will resolve them as we have done many times in the past. We all agree that conflict along racial line is fatal to the survival and well-being of our country. We must avoid it at whatever cost. Therefore, it is extremely important that we strengthen the existing machinery — the Barisan Nasional — to resolve effectively any conflict that threatens our unity and harmony.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In a multiracial country like ours, we need leaders, at all levels of society who are more than mere leaders of their respective communities. Indeed, these leaders must be acceptable to all communities. They must always place national interests above sectional and communal interests. We are fortunate that in the Barisan Nasional we have this type of leaders. The country owes its prosperity and political stability to them. Because they are national leaders, they have cooperated and worked closely together. Some people look upon this spirit of cooperation as a weakness and a sign of being subservient. They do not realise that it is a mark of great strength and courage. It needs courage to consult and to give and take. It is only with courage that we can hope to resolve the conflicts that may arise from time to time. It is only with strength and self-confidence that we can fulfil the responsibilities entrusted to us by our people.

All these qualities of leadership are inherent in the Barisan Nasional. I have often stressed that consultations and consensus are the only approach will succeed. Consultation and consensus reinforce the trust that we have in each other as partners in our sacred task to build a united, prosperous and just nation. At certain stages of our political development there have been issues that tended to divide us along racial lines. Inevitably, the trust and the shared experience over almost three decades of cooperation amongst our leaders have help in resolving these issues. We are bound to face similar problems in the future. Our sense of trust and our experience will again be tested. But for as long as we are continually guided by national interests and not by sectional of communal considerations we will always succeed.

Our successes have been founded on moderation. In a multiracial country, moderation requires strong discipline. It demands sacrifices by all communities in the overall interest of the nation. It requires us to seek solutions which are acceptable to all communities rather than to any particular community. It is not the easiest approach – it is far easier to succumb to the attraction of extremist views. But for us who have placed national interests above sectional and communal considerations, it is the only way.

For the past 22 years of independence, our leaders have never surrendered long-term national objectives for short-term political gains. This principle must never be sacrificed.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The MCA is an important component of the Barisan Nasional. It has to play its rightful role in nation building. To fulfil this role, the MCA must be strong and united. I now have great pleasure in declaring open the 27th Annual Assembly of the MCA.

Thank you.