

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, DURING THE OPENING OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON INFANT NUTRITION AND DIARRHOEAL DISEASE AND POST-GRADUATE PAEDIATRIC EDUCATION AT DEWAN TUNKU CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITI MALAYA, KUALA LUMPUR ON 9TH NOVEMBER, 1979.

It is not often that Malaysia has the honour to host a conference such as this one. I would like to congratulate all concerned, particularly Professor Lam Khuan Leng, its President, and Dr. N. Iyngkaran, its Organising Chairman, for their efforts and hardwork in making it possible for this conference to be held in this country.

I would also like to thank the hundreds of delegates from many countries for their wonderful response in coming to attend the conference. To all of them, I extend a very warm welcome, and hope that they will have a fruitful conference and an enjoyable stay in Malaysia. I am neither a scientist nor "a medicine man". But looking at the lists of subjects, distinguished speakers and papers presented, this conference will be an interesting and a useful one. The choice of Infant Nutrition and Diarrhoeal Diseases as the main theme of the conference is a good one. As Professor Lam says in his message, the main theme has been chosen deliberately. Infant Nutrition and Diarrhoeal Diseases are important problems, not only in developing countries but in developed countries as well. We will, therefore, follow your deliberations with great interest.

Malaysia attaches great importance to the health of its people. A large sum of money is allocated every year for its health services. Diseases such as malaria, typhoid, dysentery and tuberculosis, which were prevalent in the past, have either been greatly reduced or totally eradicated. We are building more hospitals and health centres, and improving our health services, especially in the rural areas. However, we still have many problems, especially the shortage of specialists, doctors and trained personnel.

Malnutrition among the old and the young, especially in the rural areas, is still a big problem. The cause includes socio-economic factors. In 1969, we started a pilot project on Applied Food and Nutrition. The result was very encouraging and we have introduced the programme in many areas of the country.

In this country, breastfeeding is becoming less popular. I believe the trend prevails in other countries as well. From time to time we have a breastfeeding campaign. We have introduced a code of ethics to discourage irresponsible promotional advertising by the milk industries and to reduce exploitation of consumers, especially those in the lower income group.

Infant care and diseases should rightly be the concern of us all. I personally welcome the holding of this conference which will concentrate its discussions on these matters. No country can afford to neglect the health and well-being of its young.

Ladies and gentlemen, with my best wishes for its success, I now have great pleasure in declaring open this International Conference on Infant Nutrition and Diarrhoeal Diseases and Workshop on Post-graduate Paediatric Education.