

ADDRESS BY THE PRIME MINISTER AT THE THIRTEENTH ASEAN MINISTERIAL MEETING, AT NIRWANA BALLROOM, KUALA LUMPUR HILTON ON 25TH JUNE, 1980

His Excellency, the Honourable Second Deputy Prime Minister for foreign Affairs of Singapore<sup>1</sup>, Honourable Foreign Ministers of ASEAN<sup>2</sup> Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It gives me great pleasure to address this 13th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting. On behalf of the Government and people of Malaysia, I extend a very warm welcome to the distinguished ASEAN Foreign Ministers and members of their Delegations.

Today, ASEAN is a thriving and viable regional organisation. Our socio-economic cooperation has been satisfactory. Internationally ASEAN has been given its due recognition and our views have been listened to by the international community.

In the thirteen years of our existence, we have made great progress. From our experience in fostering ASEAN and making it a viable organisation, we have learned a number of things about ourselves, our capabilities and limitations, and how to cooperate with one another. We are now more aware of our interdependence. We learned to trust one another. Through closer interaction, we are now more conscious that we share a community of interests. Perhaps, among the important lessons that we have learnt is that, through consultations and negotiations, we can resolve our problems amicably.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As regards economic cooperation, ASEAN has made significant progress. This progress has been achieved as a result of the orientation of our thinking on regional economic cooperation.

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<sup>1</sup> His Excellency Mr. S. Rajaratnam.

<sup>2</sup> Asean Foreign Ministers:

(i) His Excellency Prof. Dr Mochtar Kusumaatmadja.

(ii) His Excellency Airchief Marshal Siddhi Savetsila.

(iii) His Excellency Mr Arturo M. Tolentino.

(iv) His Excellency Tengku Ahmad Rithaudden.

Formerly, our trade had largely been with the West. Today, we have come to recognise the importance and benefits of regional trade. In this connection, ASEAN has agreed on a number of projects, some of which are being implemented. As regards tariff preferences, we have agreed to increase the number of items to 4,325. As the countries of ASEAN develop economically, trade among them will further increase.

We have also made progress in other economic fields. We have set up Committees to look into Tourism, Minerals and Energy, Finance and Banking, Food and Agriculture and Transport and Communication. In each of these areas which have been identified, we are continually finding new opportunities for cooperation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The ASEAN spirit of cooperation has served our people well in meeting their aspirations for peace and development. It is, therefore, necessary in our long term interest that this cooperative spirit be fostered and developed. The younger generation particularly the young leaders should be infused with the same commitment towards this ideal. Equally important is that this ASEAN spirit be instilled and fostered among our peoples.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have said many times, that we in Malaysia want peace and stability in the region so that we may pursue our social and economic objectives for the benefits of our people. Any threat to the peace and security of the region is a matter of grave and serious concern to us.

The Vietnamese military intervention in Kampuchea is such a threat. ASEAN has taken a common stand on this issue. This is consistent with our desire for peace in the region.

ASEAN'S stand and its actions on the matter are motivated by its desire to create conditions conducive to a peaceful solution of the Kampuchean issue. We believe that a political solution must be found. It is as much in the long-term interest of Vietnam that such a solution should be found. Malaysia will continue to have dialogues with Vietnam. We believe that this is important to our efforts in finding solution to the Kampuchean problem.

In another part of the world we see the sovereignty and integrity of a nation being violated. I refer to the development in Afghanistan. Consistent with our stand that the sovereignty and integrity of a nation must always be respected, we have made known our position on this matter. We strongly deplore this act of intervention.

ASEAN has been apprehensive of the possible spillover into Thailand of the conflict in Kampuchea. Our apprehension is not unjustified. It is reported that two days ago, Vietnamese troops intruded into Thai territory. This latest development may have far-reaching and serious consequences. Whatever may be the causes, Malaysia looks upon this armed intrusion into Thai territory as an irresponsible and dangerous act.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Within the framework of expanding our relationship with other countries ASEAN has entered into dialogue with Japan, United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the EEC. We have also had dialogue with India.

I am pleased that the Foreign Ministers of Australia, India, Japan, New Zealand and the Secretaries of States of Canada and the United States, will be in Kuala Lumpur to continue the dialogue with ASEAN after this meeting. This indicates the seriousness, with which these countries have taken the dialogue and their relations with ASEAN. Considering the response shown by them, I have no doubt the dialogue will result in expanded action-programmes on trade and economic cooperation. It will also enable us to understand and appreciate the views of the respective countries regarding major international issues.

We have worked hard and covered much grounds in making ASEAN what it is today. ASEAN, because of its abundant natural resources and its strategic location can contribute towards peace and economic well-being, not only of the South East Asian region, but of the world as well.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I now have great pleasure in officially declaring open the Thirteenth Annual Meeting of ASEAN Foreign Ministers.