

Penyampai : DATIN SERI DR. SITI HASMAH BINTI HAJI MOHD. ALI
Tajuk : ON BEHALF OF MALAYSIAN PARTICIPANTS AT THE FORTIETH CLASS REUNION
OF THE KING EDWARD VII COLLEGE OF MEDICINE, SINGAPORE
Lokasi : THE HOTEL CASUARINA, IPOH, PERAK
Tarikh : 20-08-1987

Yang Amat Berhormat Dato Seri Haji Ramli Ngah Talib, Menteri Besar Perak;

Yang Mulia Raja Dato Datin Seri Hajjah Nora Ashikin;

Distinguished guests;

Dear Colleagues and Friends.

Our perennial self-appointed Chairman of the Class of 1947, King Edward VII College of Medicine, came to a weighty decision some weeks ago. He decreed that Hasmah will speak on behalf of the Malaysians. As all of us have known to our cost, Chairman James Murugesu better known as J.J., brooks no argument or refusal! So, it has fallen upon me once again to say a few words on behalf of those members of the batch resident in Malaysia.

2. I knew it wasn't going to be an easy task because it was a tussle between preparing the speech and preparations for the Tenth Anniversary celebration of BAKTI, packing bags for our official visits overseas Physician-in-attendance. I don't need a Physician if at all it would be a Psychiatrist or a Gynaecologist in attendance. So we decided that the leader of the official delegation should be the scape goat so that Dato Dr James Eapen, FRCP, would be the Physician-in-Attendance to the Right Honourable Dr. Mahathir while on the left side he was to be the speech writer to the Honourable Dr. Siti Hasmah! If he tells you of other reasons for being with us on our trip, just make no comments to spare him the embarrassment! So I leave it to you to guess which part of this speech was his and which was mine.

Nevertheless, we speak for all our friends and colleagues in Malaysia tonight.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

4. On this occasion, I am especially moved and filled with a deep sense of gratitude to Almighty God for granting us all the privilege of tonight's joyous Reunion, almost forty years to the day, when we first entered the hallowed portals of our alma mater - King Edward VII College of Medicine in Singapore - freshly scrubbed, innocent and dreaming of great things. There is little I can add to what has been said before but Jeep insisted that I should quote a couple of Latin verses, which you all must have tried to learn at school and which, I think, best sums up all our feelings at the moment.

5. The first is from one of Horace's odes which Jeep translated something like this: "Ah me, Postumus Postumus, the fleeting years go swiftly by". How true this is when you look at the grey hair of the baby of the Class and the shiny patches of others!

6. It seems like only yesterday that we celebrated our first Reunion in Singapore to commemorate the Silver Jubilee of our entering the Medical School. I went in a plaster cast after J.J. threatened the Orthopedic surgeon to break his neck if he didn't discharge me. At that Reunion we were privileged to meet our old teachers like Toh Chin Chai, Monty, Sandy and the Court and others. We thanked them for all the encouragement, guidance and help they gave us during those informative years. We studied and played hard those years and we never demonstrated nor rioted.

7. The next Reunion was in Kuala Lumpur/Genting Highlands for the Thirtieth Anniversary, followed by the Thirty-fifth in Pulau Pinang and Langkawi. The boat trip on this occasion gave our colleague Peter Vannisingham the opportunity to vent his frustration by preening himself in his full Admiral uniform, which he had carefully kept the past half century.

8. At this Reunion, we decided that we should meet more frequently. We met three years later for the Thirty-eighth Anniversary in the wilds of Borneo at the invitation of our dear colleagues, Tarzan and Jane, better known as Y.B. Dato Wong Soon Kai and his Datin Sau Kan of Sibul, Sarawak. The three days in Kuching and Pantai Damai Resort had been just wonderful. For most of us, that was the first trip to Sarawak and the aged members of the group were upset because they couldn't stay overnight in a long house!

9. And here tonight, we gather again after two years for our Fortieth Anniversary in Ipoh and Pangkor Laut. Way back in 1972, we had our young children with us. Only five years later they had become young adults who refused to sit for childish magic shows but demanded disco dancing instead. By the Thirty-fifth Anniversary we were bringing our children's spouses, their infants and their baby amahs. For the Thirty-eighth, we parents decided that we wanted to be left alone. This Fortieth Anniversary, we opened the Reunion again to the family. Don't be misled, children, we want you this time to be here so that you will look after us, because life begins at 60 and we gonna do let our hair down and do the break dance, boogie woogie, rock and roll and the rest that comes with Indian summers!!

10. At this point, I would like to pay a well earned tribute to Mei Chan in particular and her small committee for undertaking the arduous responsibility of organising tonight's function and Reunion. She was nervous and if given the chance, would ring me up every day but she was determinedly the Ng Mei Chan that we knew in Singapore -- a very efficient organizer indeed.

11. As I stated earlier we decided to meet more frequently for reasons which we all know best. Forgive me if I am a little sentimental tonight. All of us in Class 1947 have maintained and in many cases strengthened those close ties of friendship and camaraderie that were forged forty long years ago. We are very proud indeed of belonging to this special Class of 1947, which I can safely claim has led the way, at least in our College.

12. It is not for us mere mortals to know the future. Two of us -- Victor and Phil -- have crossed the Great Divide since we last met in Sarawak, bringing the total no longer with us to ten. I am sure you would want me to convey to their families our deepest feelings of condolences. We are very happy to have with us tonight dear Mavis, the wife of the late Victor Fernandez. We shall deeply miss Victor's raucous laughter, his generosity, kindness and humility. So too Phil -- Father Divine or Osrasm as we called him. You will recall, Phil was the natural leader of our batch in those early years and composer of many of our freshie songs which we shall sing later.

13. Finally, I am sure I speak for each and every one of us when I say how happy we are to have chosen Ipoh and Pangkor Laut this time to be together with our families and friends.

Just as Jeep says, we meet here not for weighty purposes but simply for the joy of being together. We hope those who were unable to make it this time will join us at the next Reunion, God willing.

14. So, in the words of that famous old student song, which Jeep again has found pleasure in complicating my speech, I would say "Guadiumus igitu, juvenus dung sumus", etc. etc. What it all means is: "Let us rejoice while we are young. After the pleasures of youth, and the tiresomeness of old age, Earth will hold us". Frankly speaking I would like it better in Latin so that I would not understand about that last bit about "old age and being tiresome". Jeep had practised singing this in Leningrad and will render his song to us in full later.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Friends and Colleagues,

16. Before I sit down, I pray for your good health and success in the many many years to come. Let there be peace in our country and beyond so that this gathering of companionship and unity among friends be forever perpetuated.

Thank you.