

**SPEECH BY THE CHIEF MINISTER AT THE  
FOUNDATION-STONE-LAYING CEREMONY  
OF THE MERDEKA STADIUM, KUALA LUM-  
PUR ON 15TH FEBRUARY, 1957**

In laying this foundation stone, I am happy to feel that the long cherished hope and dream of all sportsmen in this country is being realised. A Sports Stadium in this country has been a long felt need. It has been stressed time and again by all the past Presidents of the Football Association of Malaya. Every sportsman has been clamouring for it and the demand was so great that I plucked up sufficient courage to pose a question at the meeting of the Federal Legislative Council on 18th March, 1953. My question was greeted with laughter of derision from all over the house. I knew it was no use going ahead with it. My dream and that of all sportsmen appeared to be shattered and doomed never to be realised. However, by the grace of God, the Alliance was returned to power. The first thing I did was to consult Mr. McDonald<sup>1</sup> and with him we examined all the possibilities of getting a suitable site for a stadium, and finally we hit upon the spot which, in my view, is the most ideal one. It is sited in the very heart of the town and is accessible to people rich and poor alike, for to reach it those who cannot afford a transport can walk to it. This indeed is a most fitting memorial to Merdeka, the spirit of which is to give happiness to all. As I talk to you, I still hear the laughter, but it is not one of derision which I heard in the Council but one of joy and gladness welcoming the attainment of the object of one's dream.

We have to thank the State Government and the President and Committee Members of the Selangor Playing Fields Association who have co-operated in making the site available to us. The foundation is being laid now because it is my desire to pay tribute to a person who has devoted so much of his time and energy to the construction of it. I refer to Mr. Nankivell<sup>2</sup> who

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<sup>1</sup> President of Malayan Amateur Athletic Association.

<sup>2</sup> Director of Public Works, Malaya.

has been a great patron of sports in this country and who is unfortunately leaving Malaya on retirement at the end of this month. He will not see the completion of the work he started. Therefore it is only right that he should see the completion of at least the first phase of his work.

The stadium itself, though small by international standards, will be one of the largest in South East Asia. It will certainly be one of the finest in the world, both for the facilities which it provides for sports and celebrations and for its imaginative design which makes such good use of the natural setting of the site. We have to thank Mr. Jewkes for the design of it. It is constructed as an amphitheatre on the lines of ancient Roman and Greek stadiums. It has been possible to provide, economically, terraced seating accommodation for some thirty thousands spectators which will be of great permanence and require little maintenance. The use of modern earth moving equipment has been fully exploited.

The thin shell roof of the covered stand, cantilevered for sixty feet over the terraces and the slender flood lighting towers are further example of the ingenuity of our Engineers. These and other numerous features of the stadium add to its attractiveness and will, without doubt, be admired by the people of Malaya and by visitors. On my direction, and with the advice of the Stadium Committee, the arena has been designed to modern Olympic games' standards, with a four hundred metres running track and provision for playing soccer, rugby and hockey. Full flood lighting is being provided for night games and ample provision is being made for the stadium to be a venue for events and spectacles of national importance.

You have heard, from the Minister for Works, Posts and Telecommunications<sup>3</sup> of the various details concerning the project, of the difficulties encountered and the importance of the time factor. We must give credit to the personnel of the Public Works Department, Architects, Civil and Mechanical Engineers, Surveyors and Labour Staff and to the contractors whose names are mentioned in the programme for the long hours of work being expended, outside the normal line of duty and devotion to their tasks so

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<sup>3</sup> Encik Sardon bin Haji Jubir.

that this stadium may be completed in time for Merdeka. The foundation stone, which I am about to lay, contains documents and objects presenting life in the present day Malaya. They should form interesting archives to a generation which may eventually exhume them from the dust of centuries.

In the stadium, which stands as an impressive memorial to Merdeka, many entertainments, sports meet and possibly the declaration of Independence will be held here. When completed, it will be a source of great pride to sportsmen. Within it, it is hoped that sportsmen throughout the world—particularly the Asian world—will from time to time forgather to exchange greetings and to foster goodwill and friendship through sports and games. Much work therefore will be done to bring about peace within our shores and which by the grace of God might extend beyond it. People of Malaya love sports, they love life and they love good living. They can now have all these. I now have much pleasure in laying the Foundation Stone of the Merdeka Stadium.