

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER OVER  
RADIO MALAYA ON 12 FEBRUARY, 1959

My friends wherever you may be,

Four days ago I announced at a special session of UMNO that I intended to retire in two months' time from my high office as Prime Minister. While my decision came as a surprise to all of you, I am very glad indeed that you now understand the reasons for my action and have taken it in the right spirit. It was not a sudden decision, but a matter which I have been considering most seriously for a long time. My friends and colleagues in the Cabinet have kept the secret well.

I have now decided to speak to all of you tonight in a direct and personal way. I am doing so because I do not want you to be misled by unfounded speculations or rumours. In five more days I will be going on leave and after the fasting month and the celebrations of Hari Raya are over, I will finally report to His Majesty the Yang di-Pertuan Agong on April 15th that Dato' Abdul Razak, whose appointment he has already approved, will assume duty as the second Prime Minister of free Malaya.

My leave of two months prior to my retirement does not make any change with regard to the government of the country, except that I will not be there with my colleagues and my officers and staffs who have served me most loyally for the last three and a half years. I am happy to leave my job and the office of Prime Minister and all my confidence in the hands of my loyal friend and able Deputy Premier, Dato' Abdul Razak bin Hussein. He will take over all my duties while I am on leave until April 15 when His Majesty will send for him and he will formally become Prime Minister in his own right.

I shall still remain as Head of the Alliance Party, which is the party controlling the government of our country. As such, you can be sure that the policy of the government will be no different to what it has been all the time since the Alliance took over the government, and all the members of the party will carry on their work both inside and outside the Cabinet, in the normal way.

I want to take this opportunity publicly to thank all my Cabinet colleagues for the loyalty and devotion they have shown to me, and for the energy and enterprise they have brought to play in the national task of administering and guiding the destiny and progress of Malaya.

We have never had any differences of opinion with regard to either administration or policy. We have all worked together in a spirit of real unity. All my colleagues have accepted the principle of collective responsibility without question, and they have carried out the principle to the very letter. Their team work has made the word "Alliance" a living letter. As a Cabinet, they are a positive symbol of the spirit and the purpose which has made the Alliance Party what it is.

They have proved this by their work and their devotion to duty, and by their personal efforts. They are a living example of how Malaysians of differing racial origins can think and work together in perfect harmony and unison. They are bound only by a patriotic love of Malaya, their hearts and loyalty are dedicated to the service of the people and the nation.

All through this time I have had with them, from the day when we prepared to work for Merdeka, to the time we agreed to join the Executive Council, and right up to the achievement of independence there was never any discord. I had to give in to them as often as they had to give in to me, and in this way we managed to achieve Merdeka, and to push ahead with our plans for the peace, happiness and prosperity of the country.

This is a clear indication, therefore, that if all our peoples co-operate together with one single loyalty, then there is nothing we cannot achieve for the good of all.

I am proud to be able to say to you now that my Cabinet colleagues are men whose integrity, loyalty and patriotism are above all things and they are a credit to the nation. No Prime Minister could have wished for a better team to lead and I am honoured and happy to know that they have worked so well with me in your service. I will leave my job without having the slightest doubt of the ability of the Cabinet to carry on efficiently, conscientiously and loyally under Dato' Razak.

There is one thing I would like to be clearly understood. I do not doubt that some of you may be inclined to believe what my critics have said, that is that my resignation is a political stunt. Of course it is

nothing of the kind. We are not running a political circus in Malaya. We are not just politicians, we are statesmen. We are working and planning not only for what we can do for the people of this generation, but to ensure a sound basis for happiness, harmony and stability for generations to come. The Alliance Government has won acclamation both at home and abroad, and we intend to keep and maintain the prestige we have gained as a new nation, and as a free and living democracy. *What I have done in resigning is not caused by any feeling of weakness but arises from our confidence and strength. It is a positive sign that we intend to go on to greater strength.*

Far from being a political stunt, my action in resigning shortly is a national necessity. Do not under estimate the great problems which face this nation in this year of decision – your decision. From April until August, for five whole months, elections will be taking place of vital importance to the future of our country for the next five years. There will be no less than twelve elections – an election in each of the States, and elections at the Federal level. Each State will require my presence in turn, and after that the Federal elections will require my presence throughout the length and breadth of the country. I could not be present at these elections without being criticised and rightly too by parties in opposition for making use of my office, Government time and the money for the benefit of my party.

The Alliance Party – the party of your Government – intends to contest every seat in all the State elections and in the Federal elections. Do you realise just exactly what this means? The total number of the elected seats to be filled is 280 in the States and 126 in our Parliament – making 406 altogether. Therefore, even if there was no other reason at all, the magnitude of the task which faces all of us nationally in our elections would alone be sufficient to justify the action I am taking. And because I am convinced that this task must be tackled fully and to the best of our ability, I am going to devote my full time to it.

To achieve this, it is necessary for me to overhaul and to put into shape the Alliance Party Machinery. There will be the distribution of candidates to the various constituencies which I will have to look into personally to see not only that seats are allocated to the right men but also to see that a fair proportion of allocation is maintained between the various members of the parties of the Alliance.

What I want to see, and what I want to keep a personal eye on, is that the right men go forward at both State and Federal levels so that

when the Alliance Government is returned to power, it will have sound administrations in every State and at the centre. We must ensure this in the interests of the nation. This is the goal I am setting for the Alliance Government when it goes to the polls wherever the elections may be.

The biggest problem I have to face and to deal with is not the manoeuvres of the other parties and opponents of this government, but to ensure that there is full appreciation of the task ahead among the rank and file of the Alliance.

Therefore, it is obvious that I cannot sit in my office as Prime Minister and at the same time deal effectively with such matters of vital importance to the future of the nation. I have got to go out right on the spot wherever I may be needed, sink myself into the local atmosphere, be as one of the people.

It is only right that with all these problems and issues before us so completely familiar to me, that I should go out among the peoples as a free agent and spend some time, more and more time, with them. This I have not been able to do to my full satisfaction since I became Prime Minister.

It goes against my political instinct for me to try and resist the vital pull of this national need. I went all over the country when we were fighting for independence. We got it. I went all over the country when we were contesting our first Federal Elections. We got it. Now in my judgement I consider that the time has come for me to go personally again around the country so that once again we shall get in, and get in handsomely. If everything goes well and if it shall be the desire of the members of my party when returned, and if it is the will of God that I should once again lead the Government, I shall be both happy and honoured to do so. Long I dedicated myself to the service of my country, and what the nation asks of me I shall do.

Since independence and, despite the emergency, we in Malaya have enjoyed peace and prosperity. As I have asserted many times before, and as I stated once again in my speech recently to you, this has been due to the co-operation, support and loyalty, firstly of the Malays, Chinese and Indians who are members of my party, and secondly of all those other Malayans, whether they are young or old, whether they are employers or workers, whether they have money or not. It is this co-operation in unity which has brought us where we are today, and it is this same spirit which gives us confidence and hope for the future.

The year since Merdeka has not brought an end to the communist terrorist resistance, but it has brought us many friends, real friends, from abroad — ready and prepared to invest their money in our country, who are happy to lend us what we require in order to enable us to implement our many development plans. Help came from a country as large as America and a State as small as Brunei. This kind of help is what many countries dream of but only few can get. We in Malaya are in the lucky and happy position to be among the privileged few. Our friends abroad have shown and are showing their confidence and faith in us; it is up to us to continue to show what we can do for this country and for the free world.

I can assure all of you that there is no question of charity in this flow of finance into this country. It proves that this country is well run and stable — hence this great confidence and trust which others repose in us. I can assure the country and all of you that we will make the best possible use of the money we received. Every cent will be accounted for, and will be shown in our estimates and expenditure. Getting this finance is a great achievement; what we do with it is even more important. Money attracts money, and if we do well with our plans, then we need never doubt our future.

We can do this if we all keep in the forefront of our hearts and minds, Malaya. We must each always think first of Malaya, of the national need and least of ourselves. Everyone must try to help and see that the people are one-minded, with one loyalty and one aim, to make Malaya — the land we love — a happy abode for all of us. If we all do this then we can guarantee liberty, security, prosperity and happiness for the future. Every person must try to make democracy in Malaya work so that those who come after us can enjoy the same measure and more of the peace and happiness which we are enjoying today. Everyone of us must respect each others' rights and feelings, be tolerant of each others' religions, customs and habits, for in diversity we can truly find real unity.

This is the message I leave with all of you as Prime Minister. We have set our feet on the right path; let us keep in the direction we have chosen. I hope that you appreciate more now the reasons which have impelled me to resign. I do so in a spirit of service to my country and my people; whether my judgment is right or wrong rests with you.

May I once again thank you from the bottom of my heart for the help and co-operation you have given me all through the period I have been Prime Minister. I ask of you all to give the same support to my successor, Dato' Abdul Razak. With that I say "au revoir", and may we meet again after the elections.