

Speech by the Honourable Chief Minister, Penang, at the State Government Dinner to ASEAN Journalists and the National Union of Journalists of Malaysia Officials to be held at the Wisma Persekutuan on Friday, 11th June, 1976 at 8.00 p.m.

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Senior Journalists from Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia,  
Officials of the National Union of Journalists, Malaysia,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen:

It gives me great pleasure to welcome to Penang the Journalists attending the First Annual Conference of the Confederation of ASEAN Journalists in Kuala Lumpur which was opened by the Honourable Prime Minister of Malaysia, Y.A.B. Datuk Hussein Onn, recently.

2. It is refreshing to note that your hosts, the National Union of Journalists, Malaysia, have made arrangements for you to visit certain selected places in the country, including Penang in between your deliberations at the Conference. This will give you an opportunity to see some of our scenic spots and our way of

life, make new acquaintances and get to know better the people of this country. We in Penang take great pride in welcoming tourists from abroad and we are doing our best to promote tourism in our State through our Government Agency, the State Development Corporation in conjunction with the private sector and the Press.

3. In every democratic country in the world the Press has an important role to play in social economic development. A free press can truly present to the people of our countries the events that are taking place in such a manner that they can become more aware of changes as they come and thus be more enlightened on the roles that they will have to play in our society. The Press by way of editorials and of responsible coverage and reflection of public opinions and events provide us with food for thought and a healthy system of checks and balances which serve the interests of good Government and of an enlightened general public.

4. In the State of Penang as well as in Malaysia, we are fortunate of the cordial relationship between the Government, the Press and the public. The coverage of our development has reflected the level of maturity which is evident in the Press and this, I am happy to say, has contributed much towards a better understanding of the problems faced as we move towards progress.

5. It is important for us to understand the rapidity of change in the State. However, we must be careful to distinguish between changes which are initiated through the processes of social growth and social needs along the patterns democratically determined by the people and the political direction of progress. In Malaysia we are struggling to advance from primary industry based on agro-development and the production of mineral resources towards industrialisation. Our political philosophy is to reach towards modernisation, nation-building, sustaining national unity and creating an identity of our own.

6. Our political direction is intrinsically demonstrated by the New Economic Policy, namely to eradicate poverty and to redress economic imbalances in order to build a united nation from the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-linguistic components of our people. We have to ensure that all Malaysians can enjoy a fair and just society in which they all live, work and play together as brother and sister Malaysians.

7. In Penang, our development has closely followed the natural pattern of social economic and political advancement that have taken place in the State, determined by our policy of rural urbanisation and rural industrialisation concomitant with urban renewal. In the past five years, during the period of the Second Malaysia Plan, we have laid the framework for industrialisation.

8. However, the most important thing that we have set out to achieve, and which is a subject which members of your journalists will observe, is our social progress of integration towards nation-

building and achieving a just and fair society with a better quality of life for our people, where our citizens can reach for a common Malaysian way of life.

9. We pride ourselves in Penang with reflection on the aims and objectives established by our political leaders, through the representatives of the people carrying on the great work laid down by the late Tun Haji Abdul Razak for our people. We are able to show the way towards a Malaysia that they want to build by practising the tenets of the Rukunegara and we are conscious that happiness and prosperity of Malaysians must at all times be commonly imbued within the principles of ASEAN and the rest of the world as directed by the national philosophy - friendly towards all nations which are friendly towards us.

10. Within this decade of ASEAN development, it is essential for journalists to carefully observe the peoples in our region, their ways of life and to understand their aspirations and the

problems of development. It is only through careful discriminating criticisms that journalists are able to contribute towards the building of greater peace and understanding and social economic development of the people. I am sure your members will fulfil your role as journalists for the benefit of the countries in which you live and ASEAN in order to build a happier world.

11. I am happy that you have been given some time to relax in Penang as well as to see something of the way of life of our people and I hope that when you return to your home countries you will bring back memories of our small State.