

Address
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Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports, Malaysia

Honourable Prime Minister, Mr Lule, Dr Maraj, Honourable Ministers, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I should like on behalf of the Government and of our people to extend the hospitality of Malaysia, especially to those delegates in this room who have travelled many miles to Kuala Lumpur to attend this Seminar. It gives me very real pleasure to do this. You are not just delegates from abroad but our special friends from within the Commonwealth. You are always welcome amongst us and because of our shared background we always feel supremely comfortable with you. I hope you feel just as comfortable with us. At least we can be sure that Malaysia will present in many ways a familiar world - where English is spoken, where the pillar boxes are red, where the traffic drives on the left and all the other features of our mutual Commonwealth heritage make you feel at home.

I should like to assure the Commonwealth Secretariat that we deem it an honour and a privilege that Malaysia was chosen as the venue for so important a seminar. As Minister for Culture, Youth and Sports, I must also record my personal gratification at the theme for the Seminar, which gives recognition to the crucial role that youth must play in the development process.

We are also particularly fortunate to be able to call upon the Honourable Prime Minister of Malaysia to inaugurate today's proceedings. I am sure when he saw the topics he accepted this task with alacrity because his first love has always been the task of development.

I would like to say something about the organisation that is responsible for the assembly of people we see in this room today. For what has brought us all together is the community of interests and purposes we inherit from the Commonwealth and which endures, despite our new separate political destinies and the diversity of our respective languages, cultures, styles and ways of looking at life. Many of us have reason to be grateful to Britain for the graceful way she bowed out of her Empire in order to bestow on us the precious sovereignty of independent nations.

In all cases, she left us with numerous legacies - a

respect for equality before the law, and an honest and effective administration, for instance, which provided a sure foundation to our own nation building. We remain members of the Commonwealth with all the advantages of mutual co-operation and with its potential for influence in world affairs, besides being in communication with a great proportion of mankind.

Above all, after the political ties have been severed, and when the military and economic ties are weakened, what is left is goodwill. This forms the essential basis for the type of contact and consultation that generated this Seminar and which can be the source of so much in the way of fruitful co-operation. As the world, through modern communications, gets smaller and smaller, we value the security of tried and proven friendships. Again, we may rejoice that, whatever nostalgia we like to indulge, the Commonwealth is not addicted to the view from the rear mirror. It has proved a dynamic organisation adapting itself to change and reinforcing the residual goodwill of the Empire in new forces of association which preserve the new-found freedoms of independence.

Development is in fact a product of independence. With the dissolution of the Empire we were let loose on the adventure of self-determination. The challenge was to realise our great expectations of social, educational and industrial progress. Once the struggle for political freedom and justice had ended we embarked on the struggle for social justice which is the basic significance of development. The greatest pressure for change comes from the youthful sector of the population. The young can be impatient and demanding. They are naturally future-oriented and possess an appetite for modernity. In dress, in hair-styles, in social behaviour, it is youth who seek to innovate.

A common feature of most developing countries is a predominantly youthful population for whom we must cater. It is incumbent on us, as part of our continuing leadership, to move more in the direction of ground level aspirations and attitudes. It is no good being like the leaders who lead the last generation or the general who is fighting the last war. The past independent generation inherits a young nation which must be alert to the idiom and accents of youth. Ours is a new society which in many cases we are restructuring in the process of development. This is something that youth, in search of its own identity, can well understand.

When we confront the task of development, however, we face the reality of underdevelopment and the facts of scarcity. Too many of our countries still manifest in their rural sector the sub-standard life from time immemorial - with poverty, illiteracy,

disease and over-population. The spectre of unemployment is one that above all affects our young people. The answer lies in development towards economic growth to eradicate these social ills and provide for the next generation the range of opportunities consonant with the freedom of sovereign nations. This also means education and training geared to the pace with which we modernise our society and emphasis upon technical skills and scientific manpower.

This is where co-operation within the Commonwealth and technical exchanges can be of enormous benefit to the developing nations. Britain, for instance, has always been an educational magnet to students throughout the Commonwealth. There are some 42,000 of them studying there while Britain exports some 3,000 teachers, 6,000 educational experts and 11,000 technical experts. This Seminar is an opportunity to explore other ways and means of expanding the training opportunities for our youth and other concrete ways in which we may get them to participate directly in economic projects and other aspects of development work.

As the world gets smaller, we have to learn to live together more and more. In the Commonwealth, and especially for us in this region, we have a life-belt of contacts and friendships we may look to for effective international co-operation. This spirit of co-operation is well known in this country: in the kampongs or villages it is known as 'Gotong Royong'.

I wish you every success in your deliberations, which I am sure will generate the maximum by way of this essential co-operation.