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RETIREMENT OF TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN
Tribute by the Prime Minister, Mr. John Gorton

The Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tunku Abdul Rahman, steps down from office tomorrow after thirteen years during which he has left an indelible imprint on Malaysian history.

The Tunku was the political architect first of Malayan Independence in 1957 and subsequently of Malaysia in 1963. In the course of his period in office he has guided the national destiny with courage and remarkable skill.

He has in his time seen communist revolutionary war, undeclared external aggression and internal divisions within Malaysia itself, each and all of them representing a deadly peril to the nation. The fact that Tunku Abdul Rahman is able to hand over to his successor a stable and prosperous country that is rapidly increasing its capability for self-defence, is at peace with its neighbours, and has a government that is deeply committed to the honourable solution of its communal problems, is a measure of the Tunku's achievement.

Tunku Abdul Rahman's personal qualities are well known not only in his own country and to the Commonwealth, of which he has long been a deeply respected elder statesman, but to the world at large. These are notably, a profound tolerance and even-handedness, a concern for human values and a firm refusal to be diverted from his long-term objectives by alarms and pressures that he has judged to be transient.

The Tunku has always been a good friend to Australia, and his departure will be noted with regret both by my Government and by myself personally. Nevertheless this regret will be compounded with the satisfaction we feel that his policies have been so well implanted. We know that the Tunku's successor Tun Abdul Razak is a statesman very much in the Tunku's mould and no less a good friend of this country. We wish him the best of good fortune as he prepares to accept the heavy burden of national responsibility.

Finally let me formally offer to the Tunku the best wishes of the Australian Government and people, and the hope that his years of retirement will bring him peace and contentment in contemplation of a career of great political achievement.

CANBERRA
20 September 1970

BACKGROUND:

The Prime Minister has also sent the Tunku a personal message, expressing similar sentiments to this public tribute.

T. EGGLETON
PRESS SECRETARY