

FOR PRESS:

P.M. No. 73/1963

MALAYSIA

Statement by the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Sir Robert Menzies

"Australia welcomes the new Federation of Malaysia which comes into being tomorrow. We wish it well in every way and believe that it will contribute to the welfare and prosperity of its people. The joining together of the three former British territories of Singapore, Sarawak and North Borneo (or Sabah as it is now to be called) with the independent Federation of Malaya to form Malaysia represents a population increase for the new Federation of 3,000,000 people and the addition of a wide diversity of economic resources and skills. Malaya has made great progress since it received independence in August, 1957 and has shown its ability to build a free and prosperous nation. I am confident that the accretion of the three new states will give great scope for development to all of them.

I have attempted to sum up my own views and what I think are the views of all Australians in the following message which I am sending to the Prime Minister Designate of Malaysia, Tunku Abdul Rahman, today -

We in Australia have expressed a clear and continuing conviction that the establishment of Malaysia would be a welcome and progressive development in the history of South East Asia. Events of this magnitude do not take place without frictions and hazards. You and the other representative leaders of the constituent elements of Malaysia have maintained your dedication and belief in what you believe to be best for your peoples. Now Malaysia has been brought into existence as a threat to none and a positive factor for stability and progress.

The contacts and associations between our Governments and peoples have been many and close. They have been marked by feelings of mutual goodwill and, on our part, by respect for and appreciation of your achievements in the few short years since independence. The main features which distinguish the performance - wise and tolerant government, free institutions and policies of economic growth and social development - provide a good augury for the future of the new and wider Federation.' "

Sir Robert said he also wished to comment on the report issued by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, U Thant, on the findings of his representatives concerning the wishes of the peoples of Sarawak and Sabah (North Borneo) with regard to the inclusion of their territories in Malaysia.

The Prime Minister expressed his satisfaction that the United Nations Secretary-General had confirmed in such unmistakable terms what the Australian Government had believed to be true, namely, that the substantial majority of the peoples of the territories of Sabah and Sarawak were in favour of Malaysia. Both in public statements and in diplomatic exchanges the Australian Government had expressed their conviction that this was the case.

The Prime Minister recalled how the role of the United Nations Secretary-General in the affair had originated. The Foreign Ministers of Indonesia and the Philippines at their meeting in Manila in June told the Malayan representatives that "they would welcome the formation of Malaysia provided the support of the people of the Borneo territories is ascertained by an independent and impartial authority, the Secretary-General of the United Nations or his representative." Later the Heads of Government of Indonesia, Malaya and the Philippines, meeting in Manila, laid down the terms under which they would request U Thant to carry out this task of ascertainment. This task has now been fully discharged.

The Prime Minister went on to say that the Malayan Government as well as the Governments of Britain and the Borneo territories had done everything that might reasonably be expected to gain acceptance of Malaysia by its neighbours. The Secretary-General's findings were regarded by the Australian Government as deciding this question beyond further argument.

It was obvious that his representatives had discharged their functions with great care and sense of responsibility and the Australian Government strongly hoped that the findings would be accepted by the Governments concerned.

The Australian Minister for External Affairs, Sir Garfield Barwick, had made abundantly clear to Indonesian leaders, during the last few days, Australia's position on these matters.

---

CANBERRA,

15th September, 1963.