

On each of my nine visits to your capital since 1962 as Deputy Leader of the Opposition, as Leader of the Opposition, as Prime Minister of Australia, you have always received me and I have been able to draw on your wisdom and experience. I have valued that highly and equally value the warmth of your friendship. It may be that in Australia we cannot welcome you with that natural grace, the instinctive elegance, the unaffected charm which is the characteristic of the Malaysian people. But there is nothing lacking in our warmth of feeling in our welcome to you and Toh Puan Rahah and our warmth and goodwill towards your people and your nation.

My pleasure in welcoming you here on your first Prime Ministerial visit derives in considerable part from the honour I find in being host to a leader who must rank as South East Asia's longest serving and most dedicated and industrious servant of his people. For 20 years from the beginning of national independence, you have served as a Minister. Under your guidance the last five years have been years of marked growth and development within Malaysia.

I recall my previous visits to your country not only because of the pleasure the memory holds for me but as a measure of the remarkable and beneficial changes which have occurred in our region in that period. In 1962 ASEAN could not have existed, could hardly have been contemplated. Confrontation has given way to regional cooperation which has made ASEAN one of the world's most truly effective regional associations. All the nations of our region except our common great neighbour Indonesia refused with varying degrees of hostility and ignorance, to recognise the reality of China. A thirty-year civil war in Indo-China was in a temporary lull before its bloodiest and most catastrophic renewal. The concept of a zone of peace, freedom and neutrality for the region would have been dismissed as dangerous nonsense as indeed it still is in certain quarters.

As Prime Minister, Tun, you have been very much in the vanguard of those who have had the foresight to take positive steps in the developments which have ended old hostilities and the old sterilities. You led the way in recognising the reality of China and others have followed this lead. And now with the end of the Vietnamese and Cambodian wars your Government is actively working for harmony amongst all the nations of South East Asia. I cannot but agree that the end of the war in Indo-China provides the region with its first real opportunity to achieve peace, progress and stability. You are to be commended for making cooperation and conciliation the basis of your relations with the new Indo China Governments.

You realistically acknowledge , I know, that the process of reconciliation will not be without its frustrations. But you will persevere. In the end trust and goodwill will be rewarded with the development of lasting links and mutual respect. You have urged ZOPFAN. Our region must not be the area of confrontation and competition between the Great Powers.

It is gratifying to reflect upon our exchanges in Kuala Lumpur in January 1974, when the war in Indo China still raged, and note that many of the hopes we held then for the future of the region have come to be fulfilled.

The relationship between our two countries today is deepening and widening. Trade, investment, development assistance, defence cooperation, participation in common regional organisations and in particular, the Commonwealth of Nations, and student exchange, and tourism, make our relationship meaningful, fruitful, living. We share common inheritance of institutions, particularly those relating to parliamentary democracy and the rule of law.

We share the Federal system and a bicameral system, we share to a varying degree the experience of the difficulties of both. You, Prime Minister, may even have experienced the passing pangs which come from the pretensions of provincial satraps. There may even be occasional murmurs against the centralists in Kuala Lumpur as there are against your counterparts in Canberra.

Democracy, particularly in a federal system, is extraordinarily complex and extraordinarily fragile. Around the world it is going through its most challenging time. It is under challenge in nations with a relatively brief tradition of Parliamentary democracy, and in those with a long tradition. We are two of the

handful of Parliamentary democracies left in our region. There are those in both our countries, who in their different ways, are challenging the system, challenging the tradition. The Malaysian national Parliament is only twenty years old. It would be natural that such a nation would look to nations with a more mature Parliamentary system, an older tradition, well-entrenched democracy conventions, as an example - nations like Australia, Parliaments like the Australian Parliament. It would be appalling if we were unable to get that example. You, Mr Prime Minister, have battled valiantly in your country to uphold the essence of democracy. You have done your part. May I say in this Parliamentary gathering, as one Parliamentarian to another, I intend to play mine.

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