

DRAFT SPEECH

**Official Opening & Keynote Address by
YB Senator Tuan Waytha Moorthy A/L Ponnusamy
Minister in the Prime Minister Department
(National Unity and Social Wellbeing)**

“National Unity the Bedrock Foundation for New Malaysia”

NEW MALAYSIA SUMMIT

**18 October 2018 ~ Auditorium, Level 3A, Connexion
Conference & Event Centre (CCEC) Kuala Lumpur**

YBhg Tan Sri Dato' Dr Michael Yeoh, President of the
International Strategy
Institute (ISI)

Mr Cheah Chyuan Yong, Chairman of the International Strategy
Institute (ISI)

Excellencies and Distinguished Guests

Summit participants, members of the media

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning and a very warm welcome to all of you.

First of all I would like to express my gratitude to the International Strategy Institute (ISI), for inviting me to the opening ceremony of the New Malaysia Summit. Personally, I'm delighted to be here

today, as this is an important initiative towards the formation of the future generations of Malaysian.

When change came on May 9, it brought along the hope of a New Malaysia in the minds of many Malaysian. The people, on May 9, voted for change and now look forward to an administration that, in their own words, practises competency, accountability and transparency. The change in administration has also imbued people with a refreshed sense of freedom, but, like other human rights that matter, exercising freedom must be reasonable and should never be exercised out of spite or to offend.

As the newly-formed Federal Government gets to work, the reality that Malaysians have a new government with different goals and priorities than the previous government has slowly begun to sink in.

New Malaysia, as some simply put it, is a renewed version of Old Malaysia, the country we knew in the 1970s and early 1980s. As I remembered it, that was when Malaysians had more touchpoints and inclusiveness and less sensitivity and suspicion. It was a time when we had a more multiracial civil service, police, armed forces and teaching fraternity.

Ladies and gentlemen.

Let us take a moment to reflect and search deep within ourselves. How far have we progressed as a nation, as Bangsa Malaysia? Are we moving towards stronger unity? Do we understand and trust each other better today, or are we getting suspicious of each other's intentions?

National unity is central to any multiracial country. Without harmony, racial warfare, chaos, bloodshed and perhaps even genocide could be the end-result in a melting pot. Violence and unrest arising from xenophobia has been a pattern throughout history, in regions such as Nazi-occupied Europe and the Balkan states in the nineties, and the pattern is being played out even now in some of our neighbouring countries. In fact, we ourselves have had bitter tastes of racial conflict in our history, despite having enjoyed decades of halcyon peace and development. I am certain that nobody could desire incidents of racial altercation that could disrupt our serene and blissful country.

Ladies and gentlemen.

My address this morning is on the challenges faced beyond the 61 years of Nation Building and how the concept of *Sayanghi Malaysia*, the theme for our independence day, is in line with what is embedded in the Federal Constitution, the principles of Rukunegara and is complementary to the national policies postulated by the government.

Much has been said about our founding father's wisdom in choosing integration rather than assimilation as a national policy to manage race relations in lieu of forging a new nation. Their good judgment at the outset of independence has led us to evolve from tolerance to acceptance to celebrating diversity as a source of national strength instead of a cause of conflict. Of course, creating a cohesive national identity that guarantees individual rights and freedoms is not a new responsibility. The Rukunegara was expressed as a means to create an egalitarian, peaceful and progressive social order that could carry Malaysia through the 21st century and beyond.

Tun Dr Mahathir alluded that fundamental challenge towards reaching Wawasan 2020 then and still is, is the building of a united Bangsa Malaysia that looks ahead to the shared future. I believe that in order for us to understand the present situation and make predictions of what lies in the future, we should not ignore the depths of our historical context, of what makes Malaysia Malaysia, and what makes us Malaysian.

Ladies and gentlemen.

It is the job of every citizen and every stakeholder in Malaysia to help strengthen national unity. The government cannot do it alone. NGOs and socially responsible corporations can't do it alone. The rakyat plays a paramount role in unity. We need all

citizens to engage and buy into the process of forging national unity and integration.

How can we create this ideal environment that nourishes a united Bangsa Malaysia? This Summit is ideally placed to come up with some of the solutions to that question, and I commend ISI for driving this event.

Today, the Federal Constitution and Rukunegara are still the leading guides for nation-building. But how can we enhance them and make them of more relevance in daily life? The best practices enjoined by both the Constitution and the Rukunegara, particularly in the achievement of unity have been largely sidelined in the pursuit of material wealth and economic development. In addition, Malaysians may not pay much attention to the need for unity as spelt out by our Federal Constitution because we are complacent. Too many Malaysians take our racial harmony for granted. As a result, we are unwilling to expend much effort on improving our race relations. Many of us prefer to operate in our own little sphere, interacting only with members of our own race and religion.

To inculcate a more all embracing worldview, we need to go back to the grassroots and the youth. It has often been said that building solid values begins by capturing the hearts of the young. In order to build the values of patriotism, nationalism and unity and to overcome blinkered racial stereotyping and ethnic

prejudices, we have begun to go back to basics with the younger generation. In future, placing more emphasis on civics and Malaysian history could also help reintroduce Malaysians to our past and entrench these values of integration and unity.

Previous administrations also zeroed in on a key aspect of the problem by singling out poverty eradication and equitable distribution of wealth. Likewise, the current government views poverty eradication as a remedy for unity and integration. How can people be equal when there are insurmountable differences in wealth, and when the lion's share of economic resources is monopolised by a few? In such a situation, there will be dissatisfaction. The New Economic Policy as well as other economic programmes were designed to spread the bounty of Malaysia's economic development more equitably and succeeded to a certain extent.

Post-NEP, what should come next? We need new strategies to achieve unity and developed status that will not compromise our efforts to become a competitive economic powerhouse. We need to set our key priorities going forward and I am confident that this summit will shed more light on creating a holistic framework for developing unity that balances the need for integration and social progress with economic development.

Nevertheless, material wellbeing is only one side of the unity equation. Economic development will not be meaningful without

understanding, harmony, goodwill and trust among the people. The spirit of patriotism must always be cultivated as we work towards racial harmony and unity. To inculcate such a spirit, we need to build a culture that values unity and integration. We need to build a Malaysian culture whereby people interact closely more often, and not confine our interaction and social gatherings merely to festive occasions such as Eid and Christmas. Indeed, we need to infuse the festive spirit of togetherness, co-existence and cooperation into our daily lives.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Unity and harmony are all the more essential as we brace ourselves to face the imminent challenges posed by globalisation. There is a sea of external challenges being posed to us by rival nations and economies; we need to have peace, serenity and harmony at home in order to deal effectively with these challenges and position ourselves as a model nation. It would be counter-productive if any ethnic group were to test the boundaries of harmony and unity by pursuing a racial agenda, which would only sow the seeds of discord in our multi-racial nation.

Today's summit could be a valuable platform for us to forge greater racial harmony. Let us preserve and nurture what we

have achieved so far through the spirit of co-existence and accommodation. Do not allow political and religious extremism to divide this beloved nation. Let us recreate the good days of yesteryear when all of us were truly Bangsa Malaysia working together and had little regard for skin colour.

Finally, let's not just stop at politically correct rhetoric. Now is the time for us to take action. I am confident that all of us here today, working together, can help develop and execute a workable formula for forging unity and a cohesive, united Bangsa Malaysia for our nation. And with that note I am pleased to declare open the New Malaysia Summit with the theme "Building a New Malaysia, Fulfilling Hope".

Thank you.