

Address by Tunku Abdul Rahman at the proclamation of independence of Malaya (Kuala Lumpur, 31 August 1957)


Caption: On 31 August 1957, the Malayan Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman gives an address during the festivities held to mark the independence of the Federation of Malaya.

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TEXT OF SPEECH MADE AT THE PROCLAMATION OF INDEPENDENCE
BY TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN - AUGUST 31ST, 1957

Your Majesties, Your Royal Highnesses, Your Highnesses,
Your Excellencies, People of Persekutuan Tanah Melayu:

I am indeed proud that on this, the greatest day in Malaya's history, it falls to my lot to proclaim the formal independence of this country. Today a new page is turned, and Malaya steps forward to take her rightful place as a free and independent partner in the great community of Nations - a new nation is born and though we fully realise that difficulties and problems lie ahead, we are confident that, with the blessing of God, these difficulties will be overcome and that today's events, down the avenues of history, will be our inspiration and our guide. It is therefore with a feeling of particular solemnity that we have listened to the eloquent words of His Royal Highness and in particular to the moving message he has conveyed from Her Majesty the Queen. We are indeed honoured that Her Majesty should have deputed her own uncle, His Royal Highness, to be with us on this occasion, particularly when we remember that he is no stranger to this land: we recall too with pleasure his previous visit to Malaya and happy recollections of his stay have remained with us.

His Royal Highness has spoken in moving words of the past associations of our two countries. We in Malaya have a long history, but we do not lightly forget old relationships. For many years past our fortunes have been linked with those of Great Britain and we recall in particular the comradeship of two world wars. We remember too the products of our association; justice before the law, the legacy of an efficient public service and the highest standard of living in Asia. We shall therefore always remember with gratitude the assistance which we have received from Great Britain down our long path to nationhood; an assistance which culminates today with the proclamation of Malaya's Independence. But the long standing friendship between our countries does not cease with independence: rather it takes on a new form. As you have heard in the gracious message from Her Majesty The Queen, Malaya will henceforward take her place in the great Commonwealth of Independent Nations whose members are found in all parts of the world, and as an equal partner in that great association. We in this country will do all in our power to promote its well-being in the interests of mankind in general and in the particular service of world peace.

Thus today a new chapter opens in our relationship with Britain; our colonial status has given place to full equality but we are confident that, fortified by old associations, and linked by old memories, our ties with Britain will grow ever stronger and more durable. Britain will ever find in us her best friend, and it is a source of much gratification to my Government that British Civil servants will continue to serve in this country to assist us in the solution of the many problems which independence will present.

But while we think of the past, we look forward in faith and hope to the future; from henceforth we are masters of our destiny, and the welfare of this beloved land is our own responsibility. Let no one think we have reached the end of the road: independence is indeed a milestone, but it is only the threshold to high endeavour - the creation of a new and sovereign State. At this solemn moment therefore I call upon you all to dedicate yourselves to the service of the new Malaya: to

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work and strive with hand and brain to create a new nation, inspired by the ideals of justice and liberty - a beacon of light in a disturbed and distracted world.

High confidence has been reposed in us; let us unitedly face the challenge of the years. And so with remembrance for the past, and with confidence in the future, under the providence of God, we shall succeed.
