

SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT, DR. BENJAMIN SHEARES,  
AT THE STATE BANQUET IN HONOUR OF HIS EXCELLENCY  
PRESIDENT SOEHARTO, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC  
OF INDONESIA, AND MADAME TIEN SOEHARTO, AT THE  
ISTANA ON THURSDAY, 29TH AUGUST, 1974

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This visit by Your Excellency and Madame Tien Soeharto is a landmark in Indonesia-Singapore relations. This is the first time Singapore has the pleasure of an official visit by an Indonesian Head of State.

In more ways than one, Your Excellency and Your Excellency's advisers and colleagues have been responsible for dispatching the suspicions and antagonism of the 1960's into a closed chapter of history. You have made possible relationships based on mutual understanding and constructive co-operation. It is no accident that ASEAN, in whose formation the Republic of Indonesia played a major role, came into being soon after your assumption of leadership in Indonesia. When it was first launched, there was much doubt that these efforts at regional co-operation would be successful. Earlier efforts to forge regional associations had failed.

Today, after seven years, even sceptics have to concede that a real start has been made towards regional understanding. ASEAN has demonstrated a capacity for more than separate narrow national approaches in tackling the wider problems affecting the whole region. Conflicts of national interests, and differences of views in specific areas, there must be from time to time. But because of ASEAN, its members have been able to resolve or to contain

these conflicts. In your quiet and patient way, Your Excellency, you have done much to maintain harmony within ASEAN.

After the ending of American involvement in Indo-China, Southeast Asia is in a new period. Detente to reduce direct conflict between the great powers, but continuing competition between them for gains in third countries goes on, even though, from time to time, such competition risks conflict between small countries. This is a new situation we have to contend with. In such circumstances, the value of ASEAN to its members will grow.

In this period, the wisdom and patience Your Excellency has shown in the eight years would be a source of stability and strength to ASEAN. We have watched with admiration your efforts to bring economic progress and political cohesion to your country. Indonesia is our close neighbour. We are confident that the progress, which has been made, will gain momentum and will spread benefits not only over all of Indonesia. These developments will also generate greater stability and confidence and bring economic benefits to others in the region.

Perhaps it will not be long before all members of ASEAN recognise that they have a vested interest in the integrity and prosperity of one another. The stability and success of any member state reinforces the well-being of others in the region. Conversely, any misfortune or calamity befalling a member will eventually affect the others. The tragedy of the countries of

Indo-China, as contrasted with the economic progress of the ASEAN countries, is a grim reminder of these regional inter-relationships.

Your Excellency's visit is a step forward towards strengthening the ties that have been growing between our two countries. This afternoon, a Basic Agreement for Economic and Technical Co-operation was signed. It will act as directive to our officials and executives to broaden and strengthen areas of mutually beneficial co-operation. In addition, it is our aim to strengthen cultural ties through more exchanges of sports, cultural and other missions.

Finally, may I express the wish that Your Excellency and Madame Tien Soeharto and members of your party will have a pleasant stay in Singapore, and that you will take back with you our friendship towards, and high regard for, the people and Government of the Republic of Indonesia.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, may I request you to join me in a toast to the good health and happiness of His Excellency the President of the Republic of Indonesia, to Madame Tien Soeharto, and to the progress and prosperity of the people of Indonesia.

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