

Speech delivered by

His Highness Tanku Abd Al Rahman

Winner of the King Faisal International Prize
for Service to Islam (1983-1403)

Praise and thanks to God, who he has given me success to stand here before you with extreme delight, to receive King Faisal International Prize. This, in-fact represent a great honour for me and for my country Malaysia, also.

The competent committee has overwhelmed me with its favour, and the generous gesture and noble feeling it has shown by selecting me as one of those who receive this noble prize. This is one of the greatest moments which I cherish in my life. Therefore I can't find the suitable words to express my thanks and gratitude for this sublime appreciation. Is there anything more praise-worthy than to receive the Prize from the hands of His Majesty King Fahd.

His Majesty late King Faisal was the one who selected me to initiate the General Secretariat of the Foreign Ministers of Islamic Countries. When His Majesty was on visit to Malaysia, and knew that I was about to retire from my post as a Prime Minister, he offered me this great honour to set up the Islamic Conference Organization.

The leaders and heads of the Islamic countries have approved, during their meeting in the Islamic Summit Conference which was held in Rabat, Morocco, on September 1969, on my selection as a Secretary General of the foreign ministers conference for Islamic countries.

I have proudly accepted His Majesty's offer, and started the preliminary steps as regards initiating the organization while I was still a prime minister, and made Kuala Lumpur the provisional headquarters for the organization secretariat. It was easy for me to accomplish the work with the assistance of my office staff. Upon completion of the first phase of the work, my appointment was ratified during the convention of the Foreign Ministers Conference of Islamic Countries in Karachi on December 1970.

As soon as I resigned from my post as prime minister of Malaysia on September 1970, I moved to the headquarters of the Islamic Conference Organization in Jeddah where I was given a palace for my residence. I started the work assigned to me there, with the assistance of my secretary Mr. Ali Abd Allah and 7 employees. The secretariat of the Islamic Conference Organization started, with deliberate but firm steps, to take shape.

Then I realized that the conference secretariat alone would not be adequate to construct the edifice for Islamic unity and consolidation. If we failed to help the poor Muslim, we will fail either to convince them of the value of the organization. Therefore we have suggested the establishment of an Islamic Bank for Development, the purpose of which to assist poor countries and poor Muslims who are leading a difficult life.

The finance ministers of the member countries in the Islamic Conference Organization having ratified my plan, and the bank statutes, I referred the project to the Saudi Arabian Finance Ministry to take the necessary steps for implementation.

It was not easy for me to forget the generous treatment of H. M. late King Faisal when he gave me permission to meet him at any time either for my work responsibilities or for any other matters whatsoever.

At that time I started acclaiming the idea of initiating King Faisal Foundation for the purpose of helping poor students in their higher studies and constructing schools and economic institutions. To what extent were steps taken to set up such foundation? I don't know and the project is, undoubtedly, good and will benefit the nation.

I am also, indebted to the Second Deputy Premier of Saudi Arabia, then, Prince Fahd, for being generous to me, providing me with all possible assistance and help to facilitate my mission. He became, with the help of God, the Monarch of this great state, i.e. the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. I also, remember with deep appreciation His Excellency the late Omar Al-Saqqaf, the then foreign minister of Saud Arabia, with whom my relation was consolidated during my work, and who never hesitated to extend every assistance I need.

My stay in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for three years and a half is one of the happiest periods of my life. All people were generous to me including the government, high ranking officials, press and citizens. It was a sad day to me when I retired in 1974. The happy period I spent in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will remain fresh and present in my mind. In this context, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks and gratitude to all those who overwhelmed me with their nobleness and generosity during that period.

Afterwards, I carried on my work for the Service to Islam in my country through the Islamic philanthropic society (BERKIM) which achieved a great success. The scope of our activities have expanded to cover South East Asia area, Pacific Ocean China Seas through setting up "RAIZAB" Organization.

We were able to carry out this mission with the assistance of Arab Countries, in particular, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Libya. Thus we were able to extend help to thousands of Muslim refugees from Kampuccia and Vietnam. We have convened training sessions for missionaries of Muslims from the area countries. Thanks to God for guidance and success granted by Him and crowning our work with successfulness.

Malaysia has been, always, responding to the Islamic Call, either to help Palestinian refugees or to condemn Israel or to extend whatever kind of help, to poor Muslims. Malaysia always responded to any call for material or moral assistance for the purpose of backing and supporting the Islamic World.

Malaysia has an abnormal status. It is a lay democratic state, while Islam is its official religion. The inhabitants of Malaysia area mixture of Muslims and Non-Muslims who slightly outnumber the Muslims. But the non-Muslims have never objected what we are performing for the Service of Islamic religion. Therefore we were able to get along with them, and we have accomplished, at the same time, many achievements for Islam.

Besides we are able to perform the call to Islam (Da'wa') which led to the conversion of thousands of Non-Muslims into Islam.

Those new Muslims were many, so it was difficult for us to follow-up and give them sufficient lessons on Islamic religion. We tried to establish classes for teaching Islamic religion, but this was not efficient. Hence, we tried another method, namely to have some of original Muslims teach some of new Muslims the principles of the Islamic religion. This endeavor has a successful outcome.

The great care of providence on Islam was manifested in the prosperity and blessings He bestowed upon those Islamic countries in the Middle East which were arid and without vegetation. Oil spilt out abundantly and turned into red gold which such countries wealthy more than they have ever dreamed of.

Thus I believe it is Providence will, hence, part of this wealth should be used for assisting the poor miserable nations of the world. Such nations should arrange their own affairs in such a way that they might have the chance to receive such aids. This what we have done in Malaysia.

It seems to me that my selection to receive this prize was due to my contributions to the Service of Islam on the International level as well as in Malaysia. Praise and thanks to God for His Guidance. Also, I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation for King Faisal International Prize's Selection Committee for the Service to Islam for selecting me as one of those who deserve this sublime prize. This favour and nobleness will remain as a treasure for me throughout my life.

Tanku Abd Al Rahman