

SPEECH BY: DATO' SERI DR. MAHATHIR BIN MOHAMAD
(PRIME MINISTER)

EVENT: THE OFFICIAL DINNER HOSTED BY H.E. MR. VO VAN KIET,
CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC
OF VIETNAM

VENUE: THE CULTURAL PALACE, HANOI, VIETNAM

DATE: 19 APR 1992

TIME:

Your Excellency Mr. Vo Van Kiet,
Chairman of the Council of Ministers
of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam;
Madame Cam,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I wish first of all to thank you for your very warm words of welcome and for the generous hospitality accorded to me, my wife and the many members of my delegation. I am indeed very happy to be here in Vietnam to return your visit and renew our friendship and see for myself the dynamic changes that are taking place in this country. May I also express our sincere appreciation to you, Excellency, for the excellent arrangements made for this visit, which is my first to Vietnam. I look forward to enjoying the charm and beauty of this country and continuing the dialogue we had established.

2. When we met just a few months ago during your official visit to Malaysia we had very useful exchanges of views on the whole spectrum of our bilateral relations as well as regional and international issues of mutual concern. I am confident that my visit to Vietnam will enhance the close friendship and cooperation between our two countries. I am happy that the seeds we have sown thus far in our economic cooperation are beginning to bear fruit. The volume of trade between our two countries has increased substantially over the last two years and several major Malaysian corporate groups such as PETRONAS, Public Bank and Golden Hope have already established their presence in Vietnam. This evidence of growing confidence in Vietnam is the result of the pragmatic economic policy being pursued by the government of Vietnam under Your Excellency's leadership.

3. Though progress in the field of trade and economic cooperation has been encouraging, vast potentials are yet to be tapped. We must continue to build upon the success we have achieved for our mutual benefit. The fact that I have brought with me a large delegation from the private sector bears testimony to the seriousness of our desire to see relations between our two countries accelerate to greater

heights. It is my hope that Malaysian entrepreneurs and businessmen would be accepted as genuine and sincere partners in the economic development of Vietnam.

Your Excellency,

4. In the course of your noble efforts to develop Vietnam economically, you would require enormous amounts of capital and trained manpower. I pledge to you today, as I have done so during your last visit to our country, Malaysia's readiness to share with Vietnam our development experience and to provide assistance in the field of rubber technology, management, administration and technical training. We do so in the spirit of friendship and cooperation and in the firm belief that economically stable and prosperous neighbours will contribute positively to the peace and security of the whole region. We also do so in the firm conviction that present-day Vietnam is sincere in wanting to live in peace and cooperation with its neighbours and participate fully as a responsible member of the Southeast Asian community.

5. Recent developments in the world have convinced us that countries in the region have no choice but to work together closely. The end of the East-West confrontation and the emergence in Europe and the Americas of new political and economic groupings, each concerned with its own regional interest first, make it all the more necessary and urgent for all of us in Southeast and East Asia to come together and plan for the future on a regional basis. Failure to do so would only put us at a disadvantage. It is for this reason that we in ASEAN have agreed to strengthen our cooperation by taking definitive steps to bring into realisation the ASEAN Free Trade Arrangement within 15 years. Other institutional arrangements have also been agreed upon to ensure that ASEAN becomes a truly effective organisation to meet future challenges, guarantee development, peace and stability in the region.

6. While we are confident that the ASEAN six would be able to play the role it is envisaged, we believe that an ASEAN 10, comprising the present six member states and all other Southeast Asian countries, would provide a truly formidable force of peace, progress and stability in the entire region. We in Malaysia envision the establishment of a prosperous community of Southeast Asian nations linked together by a strong commitment to cooperate for peace, progress and stability, where people travel freely to each other's country, where trade and investment flow with little or no restriction, and where common institutions exist to train our scholars and scientists so as to be at par with those of developed countries.

7. We are encouraged by the fact that Vietnam and Laos are now ready to sign the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation and we hope that it would not be too long before both countries could be full members of ASEAN. That Vietnam has been able to forge closer relations with its ASEAN neighbours over the last few years speaks highly of the statesmanship

and pragmatism of the country's leadership. We are glad the days of confrontation and conflict over the Cambodian issue are behind us and that we can now devote our efforts towards the betterment of our peoples' lives. Let the events of the past be lessons for the future. Never again should we allow conflicts and confrontation to arise and stultify our relations.

Your Excellency,

8. There remains only two outstanding issues to be resolved between us - namely the question of Vietnamese boat-people in Malaysia and the overlapping claim in the South China Sea. We had agreed in Kuala Lumpur to settle these issues peacefully by negotiations. We are confident that with the friendship and spirit of understanding that exist among us today, these issues could be settled quickly in the manner we had envisaged together.

9. As we look to the future with hope and confidence, let us continue to strengthen the foundation of our relations so that mutually beneficial ties will develop in every possible fields. In this regard, it is a matter of great satisfaction to me that tomorrow we shall be signing the Post and Telecommunication Agreement as well as the Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation Agreement which will bring our two countries even closer. I am confident the Joint Commission that we have agreed to establish will provide an efficient mechanism to manage our cooperative endeavours.

Your Excellency,

10. When you paid us a visit in January this year, you brought with you a cultural team to entertain our people and demonstrate the richness of Vietnam's cultural tradition. I am happy to be able to reciprocate your kind gesture by also bringing a Malaysian cultural team to Vietnam to entertain you and the people of this country. I hope you will enjoy the show.

11. Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, may I invite you to rise and join me in a toast to the good health of H.E. Vo Chi Cong, President of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and H.E, Vo Van Kiet, Chairman of the Council of Ministers and Madam Cam and to the continuing friendship between Malaysia and Vietnam.