

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER AT DINNER
IN HONOUR OF VISITING PRIME MINISTER
OF YUGOSLAVIA, AT SRI TAMAN, KUALA
LUMPUR, 13TH MARCH, 1973

Mr Prime Minister,¹ Madame Bijedic, Hon'ble Ministers, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me real pleasure, on behalf of the Government and people of Malaysia, and on my own behalf, to extend to you, Mr Prime Minister, Madame Bijedic and members of your delegation, a very warm welcome to our country, Malaysia.

I recall with fond memories the very cordial welcome which was extended to me during my visit to your great country in early September 1970. This visit of yours, therefore, Mr Prime Minister—the first by a Yugoslav Prime Minister ever to this country—provides me with greatly awaited opportunity of reciprocating, in a small way, the kindness and hospitality which the leaders and members of your Government extended to me and my delegation when we were last in Yugoslavia.

Mr Prime Minister, I am happy to note that since that visit of mine to your great country, there have been many more visits by Malaysian leaders, officials and businessmen to Yugoslavia—a reflection of the esteem and interest we in this country have for your dynamic country and its generous-hearted people.

I am sorry, Mr Prime Minister, that your visit to our country is very brief. Nevertheless, I do hope that during your short stay here, you will be able to see something of our country and to meet our people, to get to know their hopes and aspirations and that you will have a pleasant and useful stay in Malaysia.

Mr Prime Minister, during the short span since the establishment of diplomatic relations between Yugoslavia and Malaysia, our two countries have come closer together and we have the most cordial and friendly relationship. We have succeeded in achieving this extremely healthy state of affairs because of the ideals and aspirations that our two Government hold in common. We are both small developing countries, situated in two different parts of the

¹ His Excellency Mr Dzermal Bijedic.

world, which are very difficult parts of the world. This, therefore, compels us to make, as our prime objective; first, the securing of peace and then freedom and prosperity for our peoples. In international relations, we both sincerely believe and actively subscribe to the policy of non-alignment. Even in character, Malaysia is multi-racial just as Yugoslavia is multi-national. Equally important, we both believe that differences in political, economic and social systems between states should not be an obstacle to maintaining friendly relations and co-operation based on the cardinal principles of peaceful co-existence.

It is with a feeling of genuine satisfaction that we see the relations between our two countries have developed most favourably despite the fact that we started contact with one another rather late. However, it is my earnest hope, Mr Prime Minister, that we shall continue to endeavour to promote even more closer the existing ties of friendship between our two countries for, in my view, there is certainly much more to be gained particularly in the fields of commerce, economic and technical co-operation.

Mr Prime Minister, trade between our two countries has, up to now, followed a traditional pattern and limited to only a few products, with Malaysia exporting mainly natural rubber, latex and tin in return for a small amount of imported goods from Yugoslavia. I have always felt that wide opportunities exist for further expansion of our bilateral trade since Yugoslavia can be an important market for Malaysia's industrial products than merely raw materials. Likewise, Malaysia, too is an open market for many other competitive goods from Yugoslavia.

Mr Prime Minister, your manufacturers and exporters are cordially welcome to intensify their efforts to increase their share in our market. In this connection, I am happy to note that there is a commercial understanding entered into last year between PERNAS, our national trading corporation and HEMPRO, one of Yugoslavia's major companies. This understanding is no doubt an important basis for further increase in trade between our two countries.

Mr Prime Minister, we in Malaysia are now in the midst of implementing our Second Five-Year Development Plan, a bold and gigantic programme, undertaken for the twin objectives of

eradicating poverty and rectifying economic imbalance among the different groups of our people in the context of an overall economic growth.

I am happy to learn that a number of Yugoslav firms have taken the opportunity to come forward and participate in our development efforts. Some have made bids for tenders in our projects. While some of these firms might not have yet been successful in their efforts, I am confident sooner or later, they will be rewarded in their attempts.

Our two countries have already signed agreements on trade as well as economic and technical co-operation, and complementary to these, we are presently preparing to conclude a Visa Abolition Agreement that would make it easier for our peoples to pursue fruitful activities and to visit one another in accordance with our desire for greater mutual co-operation.

Mr Prime Minister, having dwelt briefly on bilateral issues, allow me now to turn to the wider international political horizon. For sometime already, we have witnessed a dramatic but favourable change in the world political situation as a major result of the growing detente among the major powers. Malaysia, like Yugoslavia, and other peace-loving nations, welcome these positive development of events. But, for us, there remains a certain amount of apprehension. In spite of an apparent relaxation of tension in some areas of the globe today, prospects for peace and security are still elusive. While we understand that the great powers have their self-interests to safeguard, we the smaller countries too, have a right to protect our own interests and the big-powers should not take it upon themselves alone to determine the conduct of world affairs. It is my conviction that if international peace is to be achieved, then it would necessarily have to come through the united efforts of all countries irrespective of their size, strength, wealth and ideology.

Therefore, Mr Prime Minister, in this context, the policy of non-aligned countries for block disintegration and the true democratisation of international relations is indeed very relevant. Alone, we small and developing countries cannot but remain weak and unheard, but as a group, as a non-aligned group, we could make positive contribution to peace, freedom and progress for all mankind if we both pursue the course of action we have charted

for ourselves energetically and determinedly and if we take full advantage of the present relaxed atmosphere on the international scene. I believe even the big powers themselves have acknowledged this.

Mr Prime Minister, what is even more needed now from non-aligned countries is that they should, with greater unity of action and singleness of purpose, seek the implementation of the various resolutions adopted at Lusaka, Georgetown and other non-aligned meetings in order to secure their political and economic well-being, and to enable them to play their rightful part in international affairs.

It is with this feeling of determination that Malaysia will attend both the preparatory and summit meetings of non-aligned countries to be held respectively in Kabul and Algiers later this year.

Mr Prime Minister, in conformity with the policy of non-alignment and with our own desire to ensure peace, and stability and unhindered economic development of our peoples as well as for all the peoples of other countries of Southeast Asia, Malaysia has advocated the concept of neutralisation for this region. Together with Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, we signed the Kuala Lumpur Declaration in November 1971 declaring Southeast Asia as a zone of peace, freedom and neutrality. It was fortunate that during the signing of this historic declaration, our Deputy Prime Minister² was on a visit to your country and during talks with Yugoslav leaders and officials, he was able to explain at length the fundamental principles envisaged in this proposal.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Yugoslav Government for its understanding and support of this concept. I can only add here that with the recent cessation of hostilities in Vietnam soon to be extended to the whole of Indochina, the concept of neutralization becomes more concrete and appears more readily acceptable than ever before. Mr Prime Minister, we hope and pray that with your continued support as well as that of other non-aligned countries of the world, we in Southeast Asia look forward with confidence to the day when neutralization can come fully into being in this region.

Mr Prime Minister, I have spoken at length on bilateral issues as well as on international matters. I now like once again to say

² Y.A.B. Tun Dr Ismail bin Dato' Abdul Rahman.

that your visit to our country has enabled us to exchange views on these important matters in order that the relations between our two countries would be further strengthened in all spheres and that Malaysia and Yugoslavia will move forward together to promote the cause of non-alignment as well as world peace and progress which you and I and all our peoples greatly value.

Once again, Mr Prime Minister, I trust that you and Madame Bijedic and members of your party will have a pleasant and enjoyable stay in our country and we look forward to see you again in Kuala Lumpur at some future date.

Ladies and Gentlemen, may I now invite you to join me in a toast to the continued good health of the Prime Minister of Yugoslavia and Madame Bijedic and to the Government and people of Yugoslavia.