

**SPEECH BY
THE HONOURABLE ABDULLAH AHMAD BADAWI
AT THE STATE BANQUET HOSTED BY HIS EXCELLENCY ROH MOO-HYUN
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA AT SEOUL, KOREA
23 AUGUST 2004**

I AM VERY PLEASED TO BE IN THIS BEAUTIFUL CITY OF SEOUL TONIGHT. YOUR EXCELLENCY, YOU HAVE BEEN VERY KIND IN INVITING ME TO MAKE AN OFFICIAL VISIT TO YOUR COUNTRY, AND I AM EXTREMELY DELIGHTED THAT I AM NOW ABLE TO DO SO. ON BEHALF OF MY DELEGATION AND MY OWN BEHALF, I WISH TO EXPRESS OUR GRATEFULNESS FOR THE WARM WELCOME AND GENEROUS HOSPITALITY THAT HAS BEEN EXTENDED TO US BY THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PEOPLE OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA. WE THANK YOU ESPECIALLY FOR HOSTING THIS GRAND BANQUET.

2. OUR TWO COUNTRIES ESTABLISHED DIPLOMATIC TIES MORE THAN FOUR DECADES AGO. FOR MANY YEARS SINCE THEN, WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO BUILD AND MAINTAIN A RELATIONSHIP WHICH HAS BEEN TRULY BENEFICIAL MUTUALLY. AT THE BILATERAL LEVEL, WE HAVE DONE MANY THINGS TOGETHER IN A PARTNERSHIP FOR PROGRESS AND PROSPERITY. AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL, WE HAVE BEEN FRIENDS, TOGETHER WITH OTHER COUNTRIES, IN THE SEARCH FOR PEACE AND STABILITY.

3. OUR BILATERAL COOPERATION HAVE CONSIDERABLY EXPANDED AND DEEPENED, AND CONTINUES TO CONTRIBUTE TO OUR ECONOMIC GROWTH. IT GIVES ME GREAT SATISFACTION THAT I CAN TODAY SAY THAT THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA IS DEFINITELY AN IMPORTANT FRIEND AND PARTNER IN DEVELOPMENT. MUCH GOODWILL HAVE BEEN GENERATED AMONG THE PEOPLE ON BOTH SIDES. IN FACT, THE CIRCUMSTANCES ARE VERY PROPITIOUS FOR OUR TWO COUNTRIES TO ENTER INTO NEW AREAS OF COOPERATION.

MR. PRESIDENT,

4. WE IN MALAYSIA HAVE ALWAYS BEEN IMPRESSED BY THE DILIGENCE, DEDICATION AND DISCIPLINE OF YOUR SKILLED WORKFORCE. WE HAVE WITNESSED THE COMPETENCE OF KOREAN ENGINEERS AND TECHNICIANS IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF SOME OF MALAYSIA'S MAJOR INFRASTRUCTURES. THEY HAVE INSPIRED US TO EMBARK ON OUR LOOK EAST POLICY, WHICH REMAINS ONE OF THE IMPORTANT PILLARS IN THE BILATERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN MALAYSIA AND THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA.

5. SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN 1983, MORE THAN 2000 MALAYSIANS HAVE BENEFITED FROM TRAINING IN VARIOUS FIELDS, IN THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA, UNDER THE

LOOK EAST POLICY PROGRAMME. SINCE 1998, THE MALAYSIAN SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES HAVE BEEN SENDING MANAGERS TO UNDERGO COURSES CONDUCTED BY THE SMALL BUSINESS COOPERATION IN THIS COUNTRY. WE HOPE THE LOOK EAST POLICY PROGRAMME WILL CONTINUE TO PROVIDE THE SYNERGY TO FURTHER STRENGTHEN OUR RELATIONS. IT MAY THEREFORE BE TIMELY FOR US TO DISCUSS AN UPGRADING OF THE CONTENTS TO INCLUDE NEW AREAS SUCH AS CAPACITY BUILDING IN ICT, RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT AS WELL AS HIGHER LEARNING AT POST GRADUATE LEVELS.

6. ANOTHER IMPORTANT PILLAR IN OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS IS IN THE FIELD OF TRADE AND INVESTMENT.

7. THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA IS MALAYSIA'S 8TH. LARGEST TRADING PARTNER. IT IS MALAYSIA'S 9TH. LARGEST EXPORT MARKET. THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA IS MALAYSIA'S 5TH. LARGEST IMPORT SOURCE.

8. IN THE AREA OF INVESTMENT, THERE ARE IN MALAYSIA TODAY MORE THAN 200 COMPANIES WITH KOREAN INTERESTS OPERATING IN THE COUNTRY IN VARIOUS FIELDS OF MANUFACTURING, TRADING, CONSTRUCTION, ENGINEERING SERVICES, ICT AND IN THE LABUAN INTERNATIONAL OFF-SHORE FINANCIAL CENTER.

9. COOPERATION BETWEEN MALAYSIA AND THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA IN THE FIELD OF TRADE AND INVESTMENT HAS INDEED BEEN THE SHINING EXAMPLE OF A PARTNERSHIP FOR MUTUAL BENEFIT. MALAYSIA HAS PROVIDED KOREAN COMPANIES WITH A COST- COMPETITIVE LOCATION FOR THEIR MANUFACTURING OPERATIONS. AT THE SAME TIME, MALAYSIA BENEFITS FROM THE CAPITAL, TECHNOLOGY AND MARKET ACCESS THAT THE KOREAN COMPANIES BRING WITH THEM.

10. THERE IS SO MUCH MORE THAT BUSINESSMEN FROM THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA AND MALAYSIA CAN DO TOGETHER IN VIEW OF THE RELATIVE STRENGTHS AND COMPLEMENTARITIES OF OUR RESPECTIVE ECONOMIES. I WOULD LIKE TO HIGHLIGHT COOPERATION IN THE AREAS OF TOURISM, EDUCATION AND ICT AS THREE VERY PROMISING SECTORS.

11. KOREAN TOURIST ARRIVALS IN MALAYSIA HAVE BEEN INCREASING. MORE AND MORE KOREAN STUDENTS ARE NOW ENROLLED IN MALAYSIA'S PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION. THE MALAYSIAN MULTIMEDIA SUPER CORRIDOR IS DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE ICT INDUSTRY.

12. KOREAN INVESTORS MAY ALSO WISH TO TAKE NOTE THAT MALAYSIA IS GIVING FRESH IMPETUS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURE, AGRO-BASED INDUSTRIES AND BIO-TECHNOLOGY IN ORDER TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE COUNTRY'S HUGE RESERVE OF BI- RESOURCES.

13. INDEED, THE MALAYSIAN GOVERNMENT HAS A LONG-STANDING POLICY OF ENCOURAGING FOREIGN INVESTMENT INTO THE COUNTRY. ONE OF THE MAIN AIMS OF MY ADMINISTRATION IS FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO PROVIDE A HEALTHY AND SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR BUSINESSES TO OPERATE. A KEY COMPONENT OF THIS IS TO REDUCE THE COST OF DOING BUSINESS IN MALAYSIA, WHICH INCLUDES CRACKING DOWN ON CORRUPTION, IMPROVING THE PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM AND REDUCING BUREAUCRACY.

MR. PRESIDENT,

14. IN THE CONTEXT OF REGIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY, ASEAN HAS BEEN MOST SUCCESSFUL IN MAINTAINING A CLIMATE OF TRUST, CONFIDENCE AND RELIABILITY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. WE ARE ACTIVELY DISCUSSING TO BRING INTO BEING AN ASEAN-ROK FREE TRADE AREA. WE HOPE THEREFORE THAT THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA WILL FIND IT EXPEDIENT TO SUPPORT AND COOPERATE WITH ASEAN NOT ONLY IN ITS ECONOMIC BUT ALSO DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVES.

15. ONE OF THE CURRENT PRIORITIES OF ASEAN IS TO ENHANCE AND DEEPEN THE COOPERATION BETWEEN ASEAN MEMBERS AND THE THREE IMPORTANT COUNTRIES OF EAST ASIA THROUGH THE ASEAN + 3 PROCESS. WE HOPE WE CAN COUNT ON THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA TO GIVE ITS FULL SUPPORT IN THIS ENDEAVOUR FOR CONSOLIDATING AMITY AND FRATERNITY AMONG THE EAST ASIAN COUNTRIES.

16. YOUR EXCELLENCY WOULD NO DOUBT BE EQUALLY AWARE THAT REGIONAL COUNTRIES ARE ACTIVELY ADDRESSING PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH PIRACY, SAFETY OF NAVIGATION, DRUG TRAFFICKING, TERRORISM AND OTHER TRANS-BOUNDARY ISSUES IN SUCH BODIES AS THE ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM IN WHICH BOTH THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA AND MALAYSIA ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE. THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA HAS AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE MAINTENANCE OF REGIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY . IN THIS CONNECTION, WE HOPE THE ROK WILL CONTINUE TO PLAY AN ACTIVE PART IN THE ARF PROCESS AS IT HAS DONE IN THE PAST .

MR. PRESIDENT,

15. AFTER A PERIOD OF FOUR DECADES OF FRIENDLY AND PRODUCTIVE RELATIONSHIP, MALAYSIA AND THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA HAVE MUCH TO REJOICE AND MUCH MORE TO LOOK FORWARD TO. LET US THEREFORE PLEDGE TO REMAIN STEADFAST IN OUR FRIENDSHIP AND UNWAVERING IN OUR RESOLVE TO SECURE PEACE, PROGRESS AND PROSPERITY FOR OUR TWO COUNTRIES AND FOR THE REGION WE SHARE.

EXCELLENCIES, DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

16. ON THAT NOTE, MAY I ASK YOU TO JOIN ME IN A TOAST TO THE CONTINUED GOOD HEALTH OF HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA, TO THE PROSPERITY AND WELL-BEING OF THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PEOPLE OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA, AND TO EVERLASTING FRIENDSHIP AND COOPERATION BETWEEN MALAYSIA AND THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA.

THANK YOU.