

**SPEECH BY
YAB DATO' SERI ABDULLAH BIN HAJI AHMAD BADAWI
AT THE OFFICIAL DINNER IN HONOUR OF THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
HELEN CLARK, PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND
AT MANDARIN ORIENTAL HOTEL, KUALA LUMPUR
16 JULY 2007**

The Right Honourable Helen Clark
Prime Minister of New Zealand

Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Prime Minister Helen Clark, it is always a pleasure to have you in Malaysia. I wish to especially welcome you on this occasion because you are here on an official visit. I do hope that you and members of your delegation will have an enjoyable and pleasant stay in Malaysia.

2. I certainly remember well the courtesies and kindness that you extended to me during my visit to New Zealand in March 2005. I wish to thank you again for that.

3. Your visit here is very important because it serves to reflect the close and friendly relations that exist between Malaysia and New Zealand. I have no doubt that it will provide added impetus for the enhancement of relations between our two countries. For instance, our official talks today have shown very clearly that we share similar views on many regional and international issues. And we have committed ourselves to broaden and deepen the bilateral cooperation which already exists between our two countries.

4. Indeed, Malaysia and New Zealand have been friends for a long time. For example, the long history of close cooperation in defence and security matters between Malaysia and New Zealand has continued at various levels, not only bilaterally but also within the framework of the Five Power Defence Arrangement and in the context of the ASEAN Regional Forum.

Prime Minister,

5. Malaysia has always viewed New Zealand as a valued and longstanding partner in many areas of cooperation. These include not only security and defence but also education, human capital development, science and technology. We are also partners in trade and investment.

6. I am very encouraged to note that the latest figures for bilateral trade and investment between Malaysia and New Zealand have shown increases compared to previous years. However, I must quickly add to say that there is still a lot of room for improvement in both cases.

7. Cooperation in education is one area that Malaysia wishes to highlight for expansion. We already have in place a good framework for accomplishing this objective, namely the Joint Working Group Meeting on Education, which last met in Putrajaya on the 5th of June 2007. Malaysia wishes to see the cooperation in the area of education expanded not only at the level of learning but also at the level of teaching.

8. I am a keen supporter of greater interactions between our young people because such interactions would help foster better understanding and contribute to the maintenance of good relations between our two countries, especially in the future. In this connection, I do wish to express my appreciation to the Government of New Zealand for including young leaders from Malaysia in the Prime Minister's Fellow Programme.

9. I would also like to highlight the need for greater collaboration between New Zealand and Malaysia in the field of agriculture and agro-business. Our thrust in the development of agriculture is the enhancement of the value chain, the cultivation of high value added agricultural activities and the development of large scale commercial farming, utilising I.C.T as well as exploiting the full potentials of biotechnology. We are, in fact, promoting the development of biotechnology as a niche industry. We invite companies in New Zealand to establish joint ventures and collaborations with Malaysian companies, universities and venture capital firms in the development of this industry in Malaysia.

Prime Minister,

10. Before ending my remarks, I must also put on record our appreciation for New Zealand's continued contributions to the peace and stability of Southeast Asia as a whole. We do recognize New Zealand's support for ASEAN and ASEAN related initiatives and activities. Malaysia values New Zealand's active participation in regional strategic frameworks, particularly in the ASEAN Regional Forum and in the East Asia Summit process.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

11. Let me conclude by expressing once again the appreciation of the Government and people of Malaysia to the Prime Minister of New Zealand, The Right Honourable Helen Clark, for honouring us with her visit. I am confident that the bilateral relations between Malaysia and New Zealand will continue to strengthen and flourish in the years ahead.

Thank you.