

**SPEECH BY  
YAB DATO' SERI ABDULLAH BIN HAJI AHMAD BADAWI  
AT THE OFFICIAL BANQUET HOSTED BY H.E. VLADIMIR V. PUTIN,  
PRESIDENT OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, THE KREMLIN  
AT MOSCOW, RUSSIA  
19 JUNE 2007**

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His Excellency Vladimir Putin,  
President of the Russian Federation,

Honourable Ministers,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mr. President,

Firstly, I wish to express my deepest appreciation to Your Excellency for your warm welcome and your kind words about my country. Secondly, Mr. President, I wish to say thank you and the Government of the Russian Federation for the generous hospitality accorded to me and to the members of the Malaysian delegation. I recall fondly the visit which Your Excellency made to Malaysia and the useful discussions we had on ways of forging closer relations between our two countries. During this visit of mine to Russia, it is my wish to continue the friendly conversations we had in Malaysia.

2. I am indeed delighted to be in Moscow and I feel most honoured to be hosted by Your Excellency on this gracious occasion in this historic Kremlin. I have come to Russia to reaffirm Malaysia's commitment to enhance the relations between our two countries in the spirit of friendship and cooperation. That was the same spirit which saw our countries establish formal diplomatic relations on the 3rd of April in 1967.

3. This year, Malaysia and Russia have good reasons to celebrate 40 years of excellent and cordial relations. Over the years, we have been able to develop the relations based on mutual interest and shared benefits. This includes cooperation at the level of regional relations in the context of Russia's engagement with us through the ASEAN Dialogue process and the ASEAN Regional Forum. We value greatly Russia's contribution to peace and stability in Southeast Asia. Malaysia looks forward to bringing our bilateral relations to new, higher levels as we celebrate the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations with Russia.

Mr. President,

4. We had a very good discussion this morning on many issues of importance to both Malaysia and Russia. We have committed ourselves to pushing our common agenda of securing sustainable economic growth and a better life for our peoples. We must therefore step up our efforts and initiate bold and innovative ideas to bring into being a more dynamic partnership.

5. Indeed, our two countries have begun to embark upon some new exciting ventures such as cooperation in space research and information technology. We have also begun discussions for cooperation in biotechnology. We need to establish smart partnerships to reap mutual benefits from the results of such cooperation. We can achieve that objective by combining the capabilities which each side does best.

Mr. President,

6. Malaysia applauds the impressive and vibrant transformation of the Russian economy. It is evident that profound changes have taken place in this country and the Russian economy has never been better. It is obviously a reflection of Your Excellency's able and dynamic leadership of this great country. We wish the Russian people a prosperous and exciting future.

7. We are confident that given the favourable environment provided by Your Excellency's Government, Russia would continue to enjoy more and more growth. Malaysia is therefore bullish about building an economic and technological partnership with Russia. Our confidence is based on our experience of past interactions with you. Our optimism is based on the conviction that Russia has the capacity and willingness to play a larger role in securing global peace and prosperity.

Mr. President,

8. The bilateral trade in goods and services between our two countries is still small both in terms of value and the range of products being traded. Nevertheless, Malaysia strongly believes that both sides have yet to tap their respective full potentials in this regard. The same applies to the area of investment. There is definitely much more we can do to increase trade and investment between our two countries. I would mention certain particular sectors such as Information and Communications Technology, construction and infrastructure as well as the services sector. I am confident that we can identify real opportunities if we work sufficiently hard.

9. The private sectors of our two countries must be encouraged to establish greater interaction and collaboration between themselves. They need to work together to improve trade and investment opportunities between the two countries. Your Excellency, it is for this purpose that I have brought with me to Russia during this visit, a delegation of Malaysian traders and entrepreneurs. Tomorrow, I will be addressing a special session of the Malaysia-Russia Business Forum which we have organized in Moscow as part of the visit programme.

10. In particular, I will be suggesting that both countries should also look beyond the exchange of traditional products and focus attention as well to the field of services. Malaysia has been internationally recognised as excellent providers of such specialized services as Islamic banking; airport and seaport management; hospitality; events and conference management. Malaysia is keen to share its knowledge and experiences and we wish to explore joint venture projects with Russia in such fields.

11. At another level of our relations, I am heartened to note that people-to-people contacts between our two countries have been thriving in recent years. Russian tourist arrivals in Malaysia have been increasing. More and more Malaysian students are now enrolled in Russian universities, especially in the field of medical studies.

These students will, no doubt, also serve as Ambassadors of goodwill for both countries in the future.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

12. In the arena of global affairs, Malaysia appreciates the role being played by Russia, especially regarding the many constructive positions taken by Russian in the United Nations Security Council. We note in particular Russia's preference to pursue the path of negotiations rather than sanctions in finding solutions for certain critical questions of the day. Malaysia would strongly support that approach.

13. In this connection, Malaysia recognizes the pivotal role which Russia can play in finding solutions to the problems and securing a permanent peace in the Middle East. In particular, we look towards Russia to secure the cooperation of the other members of the Quartet on the Middle East to give urgent attention to the plight and suffering of the Palestinian people especially in view of the latest dangerous developments in Gaza.

14. As a matter of principle, Malaysia is fully supportive of multilateralism, particularly through the United Nations, as the best option for finding solutions to the world's problems Malaysia also believes in regionalism as the way forward for finding solutions to regional problems. Malaysia will cooperate with Russia to achieve the objectives of achieving international peace and security, and in fostering friendly relations between all countries and peoples, both at the global as well as the regional levels.

Mr. President,

15. After four decades of friendly and productive relationship, Malaysia and Russia have much to look forward to. Let us therefore reaffirm our commitment in strengthening our friendship. May I again take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude for the warm reception and generous hospitality extended to us, including this lavish banquet.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

16. May I now invite everyone to join me in a toast to the continued good health of the President of the Russian Federation, His Excellency Vladimir Vladimirovich, to the Government and people of Russia, and to the everlasting friendship and cooperation between Malaysia and Russia.