

**SPEECH BY
YAB DATO' SERI ABDULLAH BIN HAJI AHMAD BADAWI
AT THE OFFICIAL DINNER IN HONOUR OF HIS EXCELLENCY GENERAL
SURAYUD CHULANONT PRIME MINISTER OF THE KINGDOM OF THAILAND
AT THAILAND
21 AUGUST 2007**

His Excellency General Surayud Chulanont
Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand

Madam Chitravadee Chulanont,

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mr. Prime Minister, we are very pleased that you are able to come on an official visit to Malaysia. My wife and I would like to extend our warm welcome to you, Prime Minister, and Madam Chitravadee Chulanont as well as to all members of the Thai Delegation.

2. Mr. Prime Minister, you were with us two weeks ago when you participated in the Langkawi International Dialogue. We certainly look forward to receiving both of you again at the end of this month, to celebrate with us the 50th Anniversary of Malaysia's independence. In addition, we shall also be celebrating fifty years of diplomatic relations between Malaysia and Thailand.

3. Of course, we also fondly remember that you had come to Malaysia on a working visit in October last year, soon after you took office as Prime Minister of Thailand. We value very much your personal demonstration of friendship towards us which, we consider, is also a reflection of the close relations between our two countries.

4. On my part, I do remember well the meeting I had with you in Phuket and Bangkok in February this year. We were able then to discuss many subjects of mutual interest and we did agree to enhance our cooperation in certain specific areas. This included Malaysia's willingness to give support to the Government of Thailand in its efforts to undertake comprehensive socio-economic development in the southern provinces of Thailand. In particular, we are ready to collaborate in the field of education and human capital development. We do so because we feel that the development of human capital, together with the building of capacities, are key to uplifting the quality of life for the people.

5. I look forward therefore to continuing the discussions during this visit of Your Excellency, especially during our meeting in Penang tomorrow. We are taking you to Penang to reciprocate your kindness in hosting us in Phuket before this. I do hope that our discussions this time can result in further progress in various areas of cooperation.

6. I have been informed that the 10th Joint Commission Meeting, held recently in Bangkok, and led on each side by our respective Foreign Ministers, had very productive discussions. Indeed, the relations between Malaysia and Thailand are multidimensional, and they extend beyond the normal Government to Government level, to interactions between people to people. As good neighbours, this would be natural and we should encourage and sustain these connections.

Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen,

7. Malaysia and Thailand are also important partners in trade and investment. But both of us trade more with other countries, and invest more in other countries. We must make greater efforts to increase the trade and investment between our two countries. An enhancement of our bilateral trade and investment relations will not only be mutually beneficial but will also bring our two countries closer to each other.

8. As we have done in the past, Malaysia pledges to work closely with Thailand to enhance the significance of ASEAN for the good of our region, just as Malaysia wishes to collaborate with Thailand to ensure the peace and security of the wider East Asia region and the world as a whole.

9. We in Malaysia are keenly aware of the important constitutional developments taking place in Thailand. As your friend and neighbour, we wish Thailand full success in carrying out the reforms it wishes to establish for the good of the people of Thailand.

Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen,

10. Before I conclude, may I once again express our appreciation to Your Excellency and Madame for spending time with us in Kuala Lumpur and in Penang. I wish Prime Minister General Surayud Chulanont and his Government great success in their endeavours.

Thank you.