

**SPEECH BY
YAB DATO' SERI ABDULLAH BIN HAJI AHMAD BADAWI
AT THE OFFICIAL DINNER IN HONOUR OF THE HONOURABLE KEVIN RUDD,
PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA
AT CROWNE PLAZA MUTIARA KUALA LUMPUR
10 JULY 2008**

The Honourable Kevin Rudd, Prime Minister of Australia,
Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Mr. Prime Minister, it is a real pleasure for me to welcome you on your official visit to Malaysia at this time. I would like to say welcome to the other members of your Delegation as well.
2. I still remember well my own visit to Australia in 2005 and the return visit to Malaysia in 2006 by the Australian Prime Minister at that time. Your present visit is the third exchange at the highest levels in less than four years. These visits do reflect the importance given by both sides to the relations between our two countries.
3. We do in fact have very substantive and long established relations between us. Trade and investment are substantial. Cooperation in education and human capital development is strong. We have a long history of cooperation in security and defense matters. Tourism between Malaysia and Australia has brought much benefit to both countries.
4. There are of course some matters about which we disagree. But we have agreed to respect different points of view. We do have consensus, however, on the need to work together for stability, peace and prosperity not only for ourselves but also for our friends in the region. We have done so through several common links which bind us together in such regional institutions as the ASEAN Dialogue Partnership, the ASEAN Regional Forum and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation.
5. Therefore, for further mutual benefit, Malaysia and Australia should build upon and add value to the strong points in our relations especially at the bilateral and regional levels. We should down-play the negative and accentuate the positive in our relations.
6. For example, the steady increase in trade and investment flows between our two countries, which reflects the confidence that our traders and investors have in our economies, should be supported with additional incentives so that these trade and investment relations could flourish further. The Malaysia-Australia Business Council and its counterpart in Australia, on their own, have played a significant role in boosting bilateral trade and investment activities. Our Governments can assist by providing the enabling environment to facilitate and encourage even more active interactions and collaborations between the Malaysian and Australian business communities.
7. Mr. Prime Minister, I would like to take this opportunity to inform you that the current Ninth Malaysia Plan and Third Industrial Master Plan offer significant and numerous opportunities for Australian businesses to participate in Malaysia's growth as the Malaysian economy continues its transition to accommodate high-value

investments as well as high-value added economic and other activities.

8. In particular, we wish to welcome the participation of Australian investors in the development of the five Regional Growth Corridors in Malaysia. We are developing these large scale projects to drive economic growth and to bring equitable distribution of quality opportunities to all parts of our country. There are several incentive packages for both foreign and domestic investors in these new growth areas. In addition, each corridor development authority has been tasked to introduce its own set of specialized incentives within their respective corridors.

9. In terms of investment, I wish to make special mention about the need for us to cooperate more in the area of food production in the light of the current global crisis in food supplies. The Ninth Malaysia Plan has given emphasis to the agricultural sector to provide for large scale commercial farming, the wider application of modern technology, production of high quality and value added products, biotechnology, and the participation of entrepreneurial farmers. We welcome joint ventures and collaborations with Australia in these respects because we know Australia is strong in these fields.

Your Excellency,

10. Another especially strong point in our relations relates to our strategic linkages in education. One of the most substantive and enduring aspects of five decades of diplomatic relations between Malaysia and Australia has been Australia's contribution to the development of human capital in Malaysia. Thousands of Malaysians have been trained in Australia especially at the tertiary level. Our two countries can expand cooperation in education by increasing the number of university twinning programmes. More Australian students should be encouraged to study in Malaysia. Malaysia has, in fact, instituted some sponsorship schemes for post graduate studies. Such exchanges will certainly contribute to the enhancement of people-to-people relations between our two countries. Many of these young people will assume important positions of leadership in the future, thus making the relationship even more significant.

11. I am very happy to note that Australia has taken the initiative to establish another layer of linkage in education between our two countries. I refer to the pilot sister-school project to put in place programmes for interactions between certain high schools in the State of Victoria and certain selected high schools in Malaysia. I do hope that this pilot project will achieve success so that the scheme can be expanded to include more schools in Malaysia as well as other States in Australia.

Your Excellency,

12. You would note that tonight I have chosen to speak about two particular areas of cooperation on which we could focus for expansion and for value adding.

13. I have highlighted the need to expand trade and investment between us because it is urgent in the context of the current international economic slowdown. This would be our contribution to combat the threat of recession in the global economy. I have made special mention about food production because it is critical to meet the growing global crisis in food supplies.

14. I have highlighted the need to add value to our cooperation in human capital development through training and education because this relationship has been time-tested and because its impact will be overarching in terms of the economic and social development of the people. Investment in the development of human capital is key for the future well being of our two countries.

Your Excellency,

15. It is of course also a good measure of our friendship when we display respect for each other by agreeing to disagree on some matters of global importance. For instance, our differences in opinion on certain issues have not prevented us from collaborating in such important matters as countering the threat of international terrorism, stopping the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, preventing environmental degradation and managing natural disasters and infectious diseases.

16. Indeed, our discussion this morning showed that we had common views and aspirations on many regional and international issues. We had actually covered many more subjects on which our two countries can and should work together. Tonight, I had selected two particular areas for special mention because I consider them most pertinent and because I feel that these are extremely urgent tasks which our two countries are eminently qualified to carry out.

17. As I conclude, let me once again express the appreciation of the Government and people of Malaysia to you, Mr. Prime Minister, for honoring us with your visit. I am confident that the bilateral relations between Malaysia and Australia will continue to strengthen and flourish in the years ahead.

Thank you.