

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER AT THE INFORMAL DINNER HOSTED BY THE RIGHT HONOURABLE PRIME MINISTER, MR. WALLACE ROWLING AT THE PLIMER HOUSE, NEW ZEALAND ON 13TH OCTOBER, 1975

Mr. Prime Minister, Mrs. Rowling, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Let me first thank you, Mr. Prime Minister, for the gracious welcome which you have extended to my wife and me and the members of my delegation and on behalf of everyone of us, I would like to express our deep appreciation not only of the very delightful hospitality we are enjoying this evening but also of the many courtesies that we have unfailingly received ever since our arrival in this country two days ago. The New Zealand Government and its officials have spared no efforts to make our visit here pleasant, stimulating and memorable, and I assure you, Mr. Prime Minister, they have succeeded in full measure.

It is now many years—eight years to be precise—since I last visited this enchantingly beautiful and friendly country. The happy memories of that visit have remained with me ever since and so I have come again this time on my first official visit as Prime Minister of Malaysia—with heightened expectations which, I must say, have not been disappointed.

New Zealand is well-known to us in Malaysia for the beauty and variety of its scenery, for the spirit of tolerance of its multi-ethnic and multi-cultural peoples, for its abiding traditions of liberal democracy, for its commitment to a just, robust and prosperous society and for its practical concern for the welfare of its less fortunate and less prosperous neighbours. It is any wonder then that this is a country which we in Malaysia deeply admire and seek to emulate?

Mr. Prime Minister, New Zealand is, I suppose some distance from Malaysia if we merely look at the map, but the very close and cordial relations which we have forged over the years in the diplomatic, economic and defence fields have surely reduced that

distance in the minds and consciousness of our peoples. Although no strangers to one another, it is good nevertheless that we should renew and refresh these ties and so I have come to New Zealand to meet again with old friends and to make new ones, and to explore new grounds to strengthen our relations even further.

Looking over the past years, we both, Malaysia and New Zealand, have, every reason to be proud of the close co-operation and collaboration that exist between our two countries at the bilateral and the multilateral levels. Our close association as Members of the Commonwealth of Nations and the values and ideals that we share in this fellowship are a source of strength that bind our two people together. Malaysia finds New Zealand's counsel in the various international forums constructive and helpful, and its voice sympathetic to the cause of developing countries such as ourselves.

New Zealand has manifested this concern for the welfare of developing countries in many practical ways, and your country's contributions particularly in the provision of training and higher education have been invaluable. Many thousands of young Malaysians have passed through your institutions of higher learning—as indeed they still do—and have made significant contributions to Malaysia's national life. Kampong New Zealand, one of our land development projects, is another lasting and living testimony to the close co-operation between our two countries. In the defence field too, you have given us significant assistance over the years.

And, at the regional level, your interest in and material support for ASEAN co-operation have helped to strengthen regional development. Your support for the proposal to create a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality is reassuring to us and a boost to the efforts we ourselves are making to establish durable peace in our region.

It is obvious, therefore, that the relations between our two countries are on a sure and secure foundation and I am completely confident that these relations will grow from strength to strength in the years ahead.

Mr. Prime Minister, I would like finally to take this opportunity once again to thank you and the people of New Zealand for the warm hospitality and the unfailing courtesy which have been so

generously extended to me, my wife, and members of my Delegation during our stay. As in my previous visit, I shall once more carry with me when I leave very happy and pleasant memories of these few days in this enchanting country.

Distinguished guests, may I now invite you to join me in a toast to the good health of the Rt. Honourable Prime Minister, Mrs. Rowling and the continued progress and prosperity of the people of New Zealand.