

## **THE DINNER IN HONOUR OF THE COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF DELEGATION**

SHANGRI-LA HOTEL, KUALA LUMPUR, 23 OCTOBER 1989

Your Majesties;  
Your Excellencies;  
Secretary-General Ramphal;  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

This has been for Malaysia and for me a momentous week, a week of playing host to the distinguished leaders of the Commonwealth, who are also leaders of the world.

2. We have tried our very best to make not only the Conference successful but your stay here comfortable and memorable. You have, as Secretary General Ramphal said, helped us to pre-launch the 1990 Visit Malaysia Year -- albeit unintentionally. We hope you, your spouses, and the members of your delegation, have had a good experience during your stay here.

3. The Conference itself has been most enlightening for me. It will be another 98 years before I can chair the Commonwealth Conference again -- and I am not sure whether I will be the Prime Minister then. I am afraid my successors are not going to like me for stealing this once in a century opportunity.

4. We have discussed many things which are of the greatest significance and concern to all of us and the world. Though we differed on some points, largely we agreed with each other. And we have really no differences as to what we should do with a number of mutually helpful activities which means so much to the less fortunate of us here.

5. This Conference is held at a most interesting period in the history of this world. Many changes are taking place which will affect us all. Hopefully we will see a better tomorrow. But tomorrow -- not the distant future -- but tomorrow, we will sit for our final session, to discuss and formally adopt the various programmes and resolutions that we have before us, and issue the final communique.

6. This Conference is memorable also because it is the last for our current Secretary-General -- Sir Shridath Ramphal. Sonny has been the longest serving Secretary-General of the modern Commonwealth. Of course, there has been only two so far but fifteen years in the service of the Commonwealth is still a long time, a hefty chunk of a man's life. Some of us had hoped that he would continue as Secretary-General for another term, but he himself felt that the time has come for someone else to have this singular honour.

7. With his going, goes also what some have regarded as almost an institution. But Sonny will not be forgotten. He has seen many Heads of Government come and go and come again in some instances. I must thank him personally for the way he persuaded me to recognise the role of the Commonwealth and to get Malaysia to be active again in it. Sonny can be very persistent when he wants to,

and persistence is a virtue for the kind of post like the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth.

8. Sonny will not retire just yet. He will only be relieved by Chief Anyaoku on July 1st. 1990. But this will be the last bi-yearly meeting of the Heads of Government that he will attend as Secretary-General.

9. I am sure that all of you want me, on your behalf, to wish him and Mrs. Ramphal all the very best and to congratulate him on his sterling performance as Secretary-General of the Commonwealth. As Chairman of this meeting, I am particularly indebted to him for his guidance, his little notes and his whispered advice. I readily lent him my ear, perhaps the only loan that need not be repaid with interest, in fact not at all.

10. We would like, I am sure, to congratulate and to welcome the Chief, that is Emeka Anyaoku, Deputy Secretary-General since 1977, who has been elected the new Secretary-General. With his wealth of experience as a minister in the Nigerian Government and as a senior civil servant in the Commonwealth for twelve years, Chief Anyaoku is bound to be an asset to the organisation. I know him well and I am sure, so do many of us here. We are glad that with his unanimous election, the continuity of the Secretariat will be maintained.

Your Majesties, Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

11. I should mention here the officials and the ministers who had to stay up late in order to make sense of what the Heads of Government had discussed. Theirs is a behind the scene activity which is hardly noticed. Yet without them the CHOGM would have neither beginning nor end.

12. The press too has played their role. They reported the goings on and, in between, some of them took swipes at some of us. It is a temptation that they, like all those who wield absolute power, cannot resist. I say this with trepidation for in the neo-feudalist world that we live in, we should not be disrespectful of those who wield the real power.

13. While we were preparing for this Conference, I had wished many times that it had come and gone. Tomorrow we will be ending this Conference and much too soon we will be saying good-bye to you, the Heads of Government and your spouses and retinues. There is a sadness which I feel deep in me. Parting is such sweet sorrow. I have enjoyed your company and the Conference. I wish you can stay longer to see Malaysia, its people, and its cultures. However, as busy leaders, you have no time. But think of Malaysia and come back again, at least for a holiday. Come back to see the friends you have made and the trees you have planted. Langkawi and a thousand places beckon you. You will not regret playing MacArthur.

14. Before I conclude, allow me to recite a Malaysian pantun or poem: CHOGM Malaysia tamatlah kini, Delegasi pulang ke negara sendiri, Sehingga berjumpa

dua tahun nanti, Harap datang ke Malaysia lagi. Literally translated, it reads: The CHOGM in Malaysia is nearing its end The Delegations return to their respective lands, Till we meet in two years time, We hope you will visit Malaysia again.  
(Poetic licence with apologies to the Aussies)

Your Majesties, Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

15. I wish you all a pleasant evening and a safe journey home.

Thank you.