

THE MALAYSIA CHINA FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION

HOTEL ISTANA, KUALA LUMPUR, 30 April 1993

It is a pleasure for me and my wife to be invited to this dinner organised by the Malaysia China Friendship Association for the honour

2. In accepting the appointment as patron of MCFA, I have given consideration to the purpose and value of such an Association in

3. political and cultural relationship with China. Over the course of in search of trade. Because of the monsoons many stayed back to await favourable weather. Some started to do onshore business and very so on many stayed back for longer periods and even permanently. Since the sailors and traders did not include women, many married locals and accepted local customs and language. Soon a distinctive Chinese Malay culture evolved and these people came to be known as Babas and Nyonyas. They blended very well with the local Malays and lived harmoniously with them.

4. culture. This distinct blending was found mainly in Malacca and later in Singapore and Penang. Since the numbers were never very the Malays or to their culture. The Babas dan Nyonyas also did not feel that they were forgetting their Chinese identity.

5. Then came the British. Almost immediately they began to identify the Babas and Nyonyas as a separate group. They were classified as Straits Chinese. Through the spread of English as a language of administration and commerce, the Straits Chinese were reduced. to the extent that the Babas and Nyonyas came to regard them selves as British formed the Straits themselves to be the King's Chinese. The gulf between the Malays and the Babas widened.

6. The activities. They consequently encouraged mass immigration of Chinese from mainland China. These immigrants came so rapidly that they had no time to integrate either with the Straits actively

7. Chinese of each other. Most Chinese sincerely felt they were Malayan citizens while the Malays felt they were aliens. Normally this would result in continuous racial conflicts which would destroy the country. This is what happens to most countries with a multi racial population.

8. But fortunately for Malaysia, good sense prevailed both among the Malays as well as the Chinese Malaysians. Except for the racial riots in 1969, the races in Malaysia have lived, if

not totally harmoniously, at least peacefully. The original racial confrontation has given way to sensible debates and consultations. The attempts by some to win support through response. The majority of the people prefer cooperation to confrontation and are happy to forget racial origins in the larger interest of the nation.

9. It is as an independent nation that we conduct foreign policy now. The people of Malaysia belong here. Their origins As much as their roots should not divide them, their roots too should not be the dominant basis of their relations with other countries.

10. Because_of ideological differences, the relationship between Malaysia and China was, for a long time, not as good as it should Today, the is very much

11. China with roots in denied. affinities. If that is not a bad thing.

12. Malaysia also recognises China as an independent nation. accepted. But China is based on their being Malaysians, albeit with Chinese roots. If this contributes towards easier contacts and understanding it is

13. _The time has now come to maximise the positive aspects of land China. the linkages and the friendship of Malaysian and Chinese peoples. Today Malaysians are investing and helping to develop China. On the other hand, China with its 1.2 billion people is the biggest oil. The Chinese are also investing and proposing many joint venture projects in Malaysia.

14. The economic linkages and interaction between China and the benefit of both countries. In order that there should be greater greater cooperation body such as the MCFA is

15. position to take initiatives without committing the governments. It will not be hamstrung by bureaucratic redtape or formalities. On the other hand, if its initiative is contrary to official policies, it will not be difficult to reverse it or to drop it.

16. for Nothing facilitates trade more than the closeness of the relationship between the individuals doing the business. Doing business with total strangers is fraught with all kinds of risks.

17. The Association can provide a forum for individuals in Malaysia who are interested in China, to meet. A counterpart Association in China can provide similar facilities for

Chinese nationals in China. The contact and interaction between the two for Malaysian and

18. On the other hand, the Association can provide information on China in order to increase the knowledge of Malaysians about things Chinese. This should include the culture and way of life of the Chinese. There is no doubt that such knowledge will not only promote friendship and understanding but will also facilitate commerce and trade. Misunderstandings too can be eliminated or tackled early.

19. Ideologically we are still different. But Malaysia's policy is to ignore these differences in the conduct of her foreign relations. As much as we do not wish to export or impose our ideology on others, we are sure others, including China, will not want to propagate its ideology here. Nor should we want to interfere in the internal affairs of each other. These parameters need to be understood and propagated by the MCFA.

20. As much as the Malaysian Chinese have a special interest in China, Malays have a special interest in the Muslims of China. It is a matter of constant surprise for the Malays to find that Malays in help foster understanding and friendship between the two peoples.

21. China's acceptance of the principles of peaceful coexistence is most significant. Disputes will arise between the best of based on agreed principles, resolutions are much more likely. Malaysia is less apprehensive about possible disputes because of the principles which govern China's foreign relations. Malaysia of course has always adhered to these principles.

22. I foresee the development of greater cooperation between the governments of Malaysia and China in the future as the economies of our two countries expand. At the same time there will inevitably be more contacts between the peoples of our two countries. Whether through government or private sponsorship, these exchanges of visits will bring benefits to both sides. For example, over the last one year, private corporations in Malaysia have extended invitations to Chinese state and provincial delegations to study our market economy and city systems. Malaysia will benefit a great deal from Chinese scientific and technological developments, including advances in traditional herbal medicine. Now that we have a MCFA, I hope the informal linkages which already existed in the private sector, would be further strengthened to foster friendship and cooperation with China.

23. I the Chairman of the MCFA and to the members of the committee for their efforts in forming the Association. Thank you.