

DINNER IN HONOUR OF THE HONOURABLE MOHTARMA BENAZIR
SRI PERDANA, KUALA LUMPUR, 6 JULY 1995

It gives me great pleasure, on behalf of the Government of Malaysia, to extend a hearty welcome to you, Madam Prime Minister, and Mr. Zardari and members of your delegation on this visit to Malaysia. We are particularly honoured to receive you as the Head of Government of a country with whom Malaysia has traditionally had very warm and friendly relations. We recall vividly your last visit to this country to attend the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in 1989. Today we have the honour of hosting you once again. I am confident that this visit will contribute towards further enhancing the bonds of friendship and cooperation between Malaysia and Pakistan.

2. We in Malaysia follow with great interest your efforts to strengthen the democratic processes and institutions in Pakistan as well as to bring about better socio-economic conditions for your people. We welcome the various measures that you have initiated to stimulate economic growth, including the promotion of foreign investments and participation in Pakistan. These measures will, I am sure, not only speed up economic development in Pakistan but also provide opportunities for greater economic collaboration between our two countries. I therefore look forward to our discussion tomorrow on issues of common concern as well as the possible areas of cooperation. Given the present trend towards globalisation, countries must constantly seek new partnerships and linkages to remain competitive. With our commitment to enhance our cooperation, I am confident that we could together identify new opportunities where we could effectively collaborate, making full use of the comparative advantages available in both our countries.

3. In our efforts to enhance closer economic relations, the role of the private sector is crucial. I am delighted that, coinciding with your visit, a delegation of important business leaders and private sector representatives have come to Malaysia for a business seminar designed to promote trade and investment tie-ups with their Malaysian counterparts. I welcome them to Malaysia and wish them success in their discussion and possible ventures. With their resources, talents and skills, I am sure that the partnership between Malaysian and Pakistani private sectors can make a great impact not only in Malaysia and Pakistan, but also in some third countries. Immediately, I am thinking of the Central Asian Republics with which both our countries are keen to develop closer economic relations. It is for this reason that Malaysia follows with a keen interest Pakistan's efforts to open up overland routes to these states.

4. While the economic imperatives should be given greater emphasis in the relations between Malaysia and Pakistan, the traditional factors that bind our two countries should also be strengthened. In this regard, efforts should be made to step up cooperation in such fields as education, culture, sports, religion and science and technology. Already many Malaysian students have gone to Pakistan in search of higher education and several Pakistanis have participated in Malaysia's Technical Cooperation Programme. Malaysia is ready to do more to facilitate these and other exchanges that promote greater understanding and cooperation between the two countries. Our common belief in Islam and commitment to the betterment of the Islamic Ummah have brought us together along the path of cooperation within the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC). We are equally ready to intensify such cooperation.

5. We live in a world that is still full of surprises and uncertainties. The euphoric predictions of a few years ago that peace would descend upon the world with the end of the Cold War have been proven wrong. Conflict, strife and turmoil continue to engulf many parts of the world. While there is a glimmer of hope for the dawn of peace in some parts, the darkness of war and oppression remains poised over other parts. Such is the case in Bosnia-Herzegovina, a country whose sovereignty and territorial integrity has been trampled upon with impunity by the Serbs. Its cry for justice has been cynically ignored by those who brag of their commitment and concern for justice, democracy and human rights. The champions of human rights are suddenly blind to the worst case of human rights violations since the end of World War II. The United Nations has not only been ineffective in handling the Bosnian conflict but has also been thoroughly humiliated by the Serbs. It is a measure of our commitment to the Charter of the United Nations and to the principles of International Law that Malaysia and Pakistan have sent troops to serve under UNPROFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina. We have earlier also participated in peace-keeping in Somalia where our troops forged excellent cooperation. I am confident that our common concern for the preservation of international peace, stability and rule of law will see our two countries joining hands in other international peace efforts in the future.