

THE DINNER IN HONOUR OF PRIME MINISTER OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA
SERI PERDANA, KUALA LUMPUR, 2 APRIL 1996

It gives me great pleasure, on behalf of the Government and people of Malaysia, to extend our warmest welcome to you, Mr. Prime Minister, Lady Stella Chan and members of the Papua New Guinea Delegation to Malaysia. We trust that this visit will be an important landmark in strengthening relations between our two countries.

2. Malaysia has always placed great importance to developing warm, friendly and close cooperation with countries in Southeast Asia and the immediate neighbourhood. In this regard we are encouraged by the positive response we have had from Papua New Guinea and the other island nations of the South Pacific. Papua New Guinea's 'Look North' policy, in particular, is a source of great encouragement for us.

3. Since 1975 when Papua New Guinea achieved its independence, the Malaysian Government has consistently taken a deep interest in developments affecting your beautiful country. We note that Papua New Guinea is strongly committed to democracy and to the socio-economic development of the country. We also note Papua New Guinea's active role in the South Pacific Forum particularly during your current capacity as Chairman.

4. It is encouraging that Papua New Guinea has endeavoured to bring the small island nations of the South Pacific closer to the Southeast Asian region and to ASEAN in particular. Papua New Guinea is well placed to do this by virtue of the prestige and high regard in which she is held in both regions. Malaysia welcomes these efforts and trusts that they will bring benefits to both sides.

5. The potential for cooperation between Southeast Asia and the South Pacific region is extremely good. The best evidence of this is the estimated three thousand Malaysians who now live and work in the South Pacific island nations, especially in Papua New Guinea. This is a tangible manifestation of South-South cooperation and of the entrepreneurial spirit of the Malaysian corporate sector. I am proud to note that, having been successful in economic activities related to timber resources, they have now diversified into other areas such as agriculture, infrastructure, housing and various manufacturing, retail and service industries. There seems to be much confidence and considerable scope for joint partnerships in other areas.

6. Malaysia is upbeat about the participation of Malaysian entrepreneurs in Papua New Guinea's development. This is a useful supplement and adjunct to the modest assistance offered

under the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme. It is our sincere hope that the Programme has proved useful in meeting the requirements of the PNG Government.

7. What Malaysia cannot provide by way of grants or loans we hope to make up with investments, sharing of expertise in certain fields and a willingness to work as equal partners. I have asked the Malaysian private sector to go for long-term relationships and to abide by local customs, laws and practices. The success of these operations is important in encouraging more Malaysians with the know-how and capital to venture into even more areas and in a bigger way. We realise however that what our entrepreneurs can do will be modest and can only supplement and complement the role of your government and that of other countries. I am pleased that Malaysian companies currently provide employment to about 20,000 PNG nationals.

8. Your present visit here, I hope, Mr. Prime Minister, will enable you to take a look at some of the things that Malaysia can offer. We believe that the joint-ventures that we have already established will help broaden and deepen the scope of our relations. I am confident that with better understanding of each other, the challenges that we face in the future will be easily overcome. Our two countries can draw satisfaction from the numerous opportunities that exist to consolidate our close relationship further.

9. Let me once again welcome you, Lady Stella Chan and members of your delegation to Malaysia with the hope that you would have a pleasant and memorable stay in Kuala Lumpur, Kuching and Sibiu during the visit.