

THE OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC
KYRGYZ REPUBLIC, 15 JULY 1996

I am delighted to be here in Bishkek, your country's beautiful capital, and am grateful to Your Excellency and to the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic for the very warm welcome that has been extended to us. This is the first visit to this region for most members of my delegation but we already feel very welcome and at home.

2. I have been looking forward with much anticipation to this visit to continue the important discussions we initiated when Your Excellency visited Kuala Lumpur last July. During these coming discussions I propose to explore ways to further deepen our mutual understanding of each other. I also look forward to seeing and learning more of the Kyrgyz Republic during this visit.

3. At the outset, allow me to reaffirm the strong desire on Malaysia's part to strengthen our bilateral relations with the Kyrgyz Republic. There is a strong mutual desire, I note, to get beyond symbolic ties and go on to realise tangible co-operation in the political, economic, trade and investment fields. Our two countries, located as they are, one in the Southeast and the other in the Central Asian regions, are well placed strategically to act as a conduit for channelling the goods and services of both our countries to other countries in our respective regions.

4. Apart from this regional dimension, I believe that there is tremendous scope for direct bilateral co-operation in mining, tourism, infrastructure development, agriculture and the establishment of economic zones. Malaysia's private sector, which has some prominent representatives in my delegation, has quite considerable expertise and experience in these areas. It is my hope that this visit and future exchanges of visits at various levels will enable the private sectors of both our countries to undertake projects and joint ventures for our mutual benefit.

5. Certain key areas for co-operation between the public sector in our respective countries have also been identified. In this regard I am pleased that there have been contacts between Malaysia's Economic Planning Unit and the Kyrgyz Ministry of Economy. I trust that these consultations are useful in laying the groundwork for the realisation of some partnerships and exchanges of experience and knowledge in public service and administration.

6. It is clear to me that there is good potential for bilateral co-operation especially in the context of the

transformation to a market-type economy in the Kyrgyz Republic and other countries in the Central Asian region. In Malaysia we have found privatisation to be a great help in achieving our development goals especially in the face of the limited resources available to government. This may also apply here. While the prospects are excellent there are however challenges in integrating our two regions' economies with those of the advanced industrial nations and the global economic system. The process of integrating with the international system will be difficult but it is essential. This endeavour will be made considerably less difficult with regular and close consultations between our countries and regions. We hope the leading industrial powers and multilateral lending institutions will be sensitive to these difficulties.

7. Malaysia is ready to cooperate with the Kyrgyz Republic in the process of integrating with the global economic system. Malaysia is sensitive to the aspirations of countries like the Kyrgyz Republic which are making the difficult transformation to a market type economy. Malaysia's own experience may be of use to the process.

8. May I, once again, reiterate my sincere appreciation and gratitude for your warm welcome and generous hospitality.