

**THE OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE REPUBLIC OF
KAZAKHSTAN**

REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN, 18 JULY 1996

May I, first of all, thank Your Excellency and your Government for the very warm welcome extended to my wife and I, and to members of my delegation. My wife and I are very happy to be here to see for ourselves the dynamic changes that are taking place in this huge and beautiful country. I am also particularly pleased to be able to meet with you again and to renew our friendship.

2. We recall with fondness your recent visit to Malaysia. During that visit we had been encouraged by the clear demonstration on Kazakhstan's part to enhance bilateral relations with Malaysia. My visit here reflects our commitment to promote these relations. It would also provide an opportunity to exchange views with you on subjects of mutual interest to both our countries. There is considerable scope for cooperation in many areas between Malaysia and Kazakhstan and, for this reason, visits and consultations of this nature are important.

3. Both our countries seem to have identical policies on the need to foster close and binding relations with our immediate neighbours. We also strongly share the view that regionalism is the wave of the future. We have found from our experience that close consultations and co-operation on a region-wide basis over a period of time have contributed to mutual confidence and habits of co-operation which not only contribute to an environment of peace and stability but also to one of rapid development. We are impressed by the role Kazakhstan is playing in fostering such a climate of peace and development in the Central Asian region.

4. As a trading nation, Malaysia has to promote trade and economic cooperation with other countries. Kazakhstan and the other countries in Central Asia offer good prospects for trade, which will of course be two-way.

5. Further, I firmly believe that we would need to inject more substance into our collaboration so as to tap the full potentials of the opportunities available in each other's countries. The private sectors of both countries should be encouraged to take the lead and act as a catalyst in fostering direct economic and trade linkages. It is for this reason that my delegation includes many prominent Malaysian businessmen. This visit will indeed give them the opportunity to learn more about your country and its business potentials and to establish contacts with their counterparts here. I am confident that with the strong mutual commitment towards

enhancing bilateral cooperation, a greater flow of trade, investment and tourism between our two countries could be realised.

6. I have emphasised the role of the private sector because Malaysia has always been a market economy. But of course our private sector is familiar with working with Government entities as well.

7. Kazakhstan is indeed located in a strategic position in Euro-Asia between China, an important neighbour, which is in the process of becoming an important economic power and the Russian Federation in the north, and to the West the whole of the European Continent. Since trade involves transportation of peoples and goods, we see Kazakhstan providing an important road and rail link between East Asia, Russia and Europe. In East Asia we are seriously studying a railway system linking Southeast Asia with China. It will be the logical step to link this system eventually with the railway system in Central Asia passing via and through Kazakhstan. This will give many land-bound Central Asian Nations access to the sea. Already you can gain access to the Persian Gulf through the recently completed Iran-Turkmenistan railway.

8. The end of the Cold War has not necessarily made this a better and safer world. Many countries have rushed into adopting democratisation and free-market economic systems. While the objective is laudable, the results for many have not been particularly positive. There have been political instability, economic upheavals and other developments that have threatened the socio-economic equilibrium of certain nation-states. Malaysia has found that while other models of development are attractive they often have to be adapted to suit our particular needs. Each country has its own unique characteristics which would influence its development strategy. We would like to reiterate that Malaysia, in sharing her experiences in economic development, will always be sensitive to Kazakhstan's nation-building efforts. Indeed we are ready to exchange information on our political experience as well.

9. In our common endeavour towards industrialisation, there will be many identical areas to explore and it is my belief that here too we can learn from each other through the sharing of experiences and the exchange of complementary technical capabilities and technologies.

10. My wife and I will take home with us many pleasant memories of our stay in Almaty. May I, once again, on behalf of my wife and my delegation, take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation for the hospitality and warm

reception accorded to us by the Government and the people of the Republic of Kazakhstan.