

**THE STATE BANQUET HOSTED BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF ISLAMIC
REPUBLIC OF PAKISTAN**

ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN, 09 APRIL 1997

1. On behalf of my delegation, I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks and gratitude, for the very warm welcome and kind hospitality extended to us since our arrival a few hours ago. I am very happy and privileged to visit your beautiful capital city of Islamabad again in the midst of the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of your independence. I hope my brief visit will contribute towards strengthening the close and friendly ties that bind our two brotherly countries together.

2. May I take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mian Shaib, and your government, for hosting the recent Extraordinary Summit of OIC to commemorate your Golden Jubilee celebrations. Under your able Chairmanship, the Summit was able to give renewed impetus to cooperation and set the direction for the Islamic Ummah in the next millennium. Malaysia stand ready to contribute towards making the OIC a truly effective organisation able to meet the challenges for the betterment of our Muslim Ummah.

3. Bilateral relations between our two countries have over the years been characterised by the warmth and closeness befitting two Islamic countries. Our meeting this afternoon is a reaffirmation of these close ties, setting the stage for a more active and meaningful cooperation for our two countries.

4. Malaysia being a small and open economy, notes with great interest your recent economic revival programme which among others, seeks to liberalise trade and investment in consonance with the aims and objectives of the WTO. This trade and investment creation strategy would, I believe, create opportunities paving the way for greater Malaysian investments in Pakistan. Malaysia - Pakistan joint ventures would contribute towards bringing about a more desirable balance in the area of trade and payments between our two countries.

5. To date, I understand nine Malaysian companies have invested in Pakistan in oil gas exploration, port storage and bulking installation, telecommunications, and type- related industry. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate our interest and readiness to participate in other sectors of development in Pakistan such as infrastructure development, housing and construction, finance and banking as well as electronics and computers. Both countries stand to reap mutually beneficial rewards by developing a partnership between us, by drawing upon each other's comparative advantage. There are areas where Pakistan clearly has the experience and know-how which could be combined with the strength which Malaysia has developed over the years to undertake joint-ventures on a bilateral basis or in concert with third parties. Both countries are well-placed to be the gateways for each other in their respective regions. In this regard, Malaysia can constitute the gateway for Pakistani products in the East Asia region, while Pakistan could be the gateway for Malaysia manufactured goods in the sub- continent and the CIS states.

6. Your Excellency, I am glad to note that Pakistan has become the largest importer of Malaysia palm oil and palm oil products. In 1996, Pakistan imported approximately about 1.16 million tonnes or roughly 84.9 percent of Malaysia's total export to Pakistan. I hope you will not only continue to import palm oil from Malaysia, but that we can move ahead together to create more value-added products from palm oil for exports to the emerging markets of the Central Asian Republics.

7. On technical cooperation, there is much that we can still do to enhance our cooperation in this area. Since 1982, 122 Pakistanis participated in various training schemes under the Malaysian Technical Cooperations Programme (MTCP). Pakistan has also made its contribution in this regard by providing manpower for the various sectors in Malaysia particularly in construction, manufacturing and plantations. Malaysia still faces a shortage of medical officers and nurses, and we will continue to welcome medical officers and specialists as well as nurses from Pakistan. At the same time we would also welcome Pakistan's assistance in our manpower training programme by making available more places in your universities and other institutions of higher learning, especially for courses in medicine and engineering.

8. Internationally, our common membership of the UN, OIC, NAM, Commonwealth, among others, has enabled us to contribute towards bringing about peace and stability in many parts of the world, in particular in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Somalia. We must continue to work and cooperate closely to realise our common shared aspirations for the betterment of our peoples and the Muslim Ummah.

9. Malaysia welcomes Pakistan's participation in the sectoral dialogue relations with ASEAN in the fields of trade and investment, tourism, human resource development, prevention of trafficking of drugs and narcotics, science and technology and environment. Malaysia would support Pakistan's initiative in making this sectoral dialogue meaningful and substantive.

10. May I take this opportunity to extend on behalf of the government and people of Malaysia and on my own behalf, our best wishes for the continued good health and well being of Your Excellency and for the continued development, success and prosperity of the people of Pakistan, insya-Allah.

11. In conclusion, may I once again express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to you and your government for the warm hospitality and the excellent arrangements made for this short visit.