

**THE OFFICIAL DINNER HOSTED BY H.E. PRESIDENT ASKAR AKAYEV,
PRESIDENT OF THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC
BISHKEK, KYRGYZ, 11 SEPTEMBER 1997**

1. I am indeed very happy to be in Bishkek once again. We are overwhelmed by the warm welcome and reception that we have received. On behalf of my delegation, I would like to thank our hosts for the welcome, friendship and hospitality accorded to us.
2. Since our last visit to Bishkek a year ago, we note that remarkable changes have taken place in the Kyrgyz Republic. These changes are a clear signal that the Republic is well on the way to achieving a transformation to a free market economy. We admire the courage with which steps are being taken to globalise the Kyrgyz economy. We also believe that we can work with other countries and institutions and contribute in a meaningful way towards establishing a full-fledged free market economy in the Kyrgyz Republic.
3. The Kyrgyz Republic starts with significant advantages in its drive towards a free market economy. It has a pool of highly skilled and well qualified scientists and other professional technocrats. We believe these experts can contribute to the well-being of the Kyrgyz Republic and other countries as well. Our two countries continue to hold discussions on how some of these scientists can come to Malaysia and play a role in the development process. While certain issues including those related to language and the question of mutual recognition of professional qualifications have to be sorted out, we are optimistic that there is tremendous scope for our countries to work together.
4. During the present visit to this beautiful country, we have the important task of initiating discussions on the joint study of the Kyrgyz economy that has been carried out by the officials of both the Malaysian and Kyrgyz governments. The report's uniqueness lies in the substantial interaction that took place between our two countries in drawing up the recommendations.
5. I am informed that it had been a pleasant and rewarding experience to work with Kyrgyz officials of various levels in compiling the report. It is notable that during the various different stages the report was done on a highly consultative basis. Its fast completion is a tribute to the high mutual regard that has evolved between our two countries. I am also informed that, at all times, particularly in the final stages, our officials were working on the basis of an equal partnership. I trust that the report would serve as a useful guide for the future direction of the Kyrgyz economy. While its implementation is left entirely to the Kyrgyz Government I must indicate Malaysia's readiness to assist, wherever possible, in addressing problems that may arise.
6. It is my hope that the Malaysian private sector delegation that is with me will be able to establish firm linkages with their counterparts especially in areas related to tourism, mining and infrastructure development. The early conclusion of good understanding on these matters would go a long way towards laying the foundation for future cooperation. It would also serve the purpose of encouraging

other small and medium businesses in our two countries to initiate close cooperation.

7. Allow me to reiterate that many of Malaysia' s top economic planners have been involved in discussions on charting a possible future course of the Kyrgyz economy. I hope that as a result of their discussions and recommendations made jointly with the Kyrgyz officials, the basis of a true partnership between Malaysia and the Kyrgyz Republic can be made. I am particularly pleased that His Excellency President Askar Akayev has been personally associated with this important endeavour right from the beginning.