

JOSE MARTI AWARD BY PRESIDENT FIDEL CASTRO OF CUBA
CUBA, 26 SEPTEMBER 1997

Jose Marti was a colossus who strode gloriously across the pages of Cuban revolutionary history. He was both a man of action and of letters, whose entire life was dedicated to the just cause of the Cuban nation - its liberty, independence and sovereignty. He was also a citizen of the world. During his illustrious lifetime, his work stressed the importance and benefits of promoting and safeguarding social justice, peace and development, to Jose Marti, colonialism and imperialism must be challenged and confronted wherever they appear and he sought to rouse the consciousness of the oppressed people not only in Cuba but also in the whole of Latin America, Asia and Africa. His ideals remain alive and relevant today not only for Cuba but for all of us striving for the very ideals Jose Marti stood for and died for.

2. I am therefore very proud to receive this award and on my own behalf and that of the people of Malaysia, I would like to express our profound gratitude to H.E. President Castro and the Government of Cuba for this high Honour. This award is both a recognition for our won struggle for independence as well as an enduring inspiration to hold fast to those very ideals which Jose Marti so eminently epitomizes.

3. H.E. President Castro stands today as the embodiment of a leader who against all odds, remains steadfast in the struggle to bring progress and development with dignity to his nation. Jose Marti's vision is alive today as reflected in Your Excellency's selfless service to the Cuban people. We wish you and the people of Cuba every success in your endeavours.

4. For developing countries' the tasks of national development is indeed daunting. We are confronted with rapidly changing circumstances, in which the global political and economic environments are seldom sensitive to our particular needs and interests. With the trend towards globalisation and liberalisation of the world economy gaining momentum, we have to learn not only to adjust and adapt to such development, but also to deal with the imposition of the ever increasing conditionalities by those in position of power and influence in the international arena. The rich and powerful continue to dictate and to seek control.

5. We are weak and almost helpless to turn the tide on our own individually. We need to foster solidarity amongst those countries which are prey to such policies and with our collective weight we can hope to wrest for ourselves our right to influence and shape policies and decisions which have profound impact on our won survival. In South East Asia, currency manipulators have brought disastrous consequences to our national economies wiping out decades of hard work by our people.

6. The South must therefore stand together in a strong united front. I believe that wherever possible, in the non-aligned movement and in the United Nations, we must speak our against such injustices. Developing countries must not be

dictated to. The goal posts must not be allowed to be changed every time to the advantage only of the rich and powerful.

7. Our collective strength can help us stand up to the world. But we need to strengthen ourselves individually. My visit to Cuba with a delegation of Malaysian businessmen is to see for ourselves how we can cooperate for the mutual benefits of our two countries. There must be areas for possible cooperation that can draw on the strength of our different experiences. We must seek ways to build on our individual advantages, to strengthen and develop complementarities. In this way we can better stand up to the vagaries of the unbridled international market place.

8. Allow me to conclude by expressing our sincere appreciation for this great honour and recognition. I wish to take this opportunity to also thank the government and the people of Cuba, for the very warm welcome and hospitality extended to me and the entire delegation. The Government and people of Malaysia look forward to welcoming Your Excellency in Kuala Lumpur.