

**The State Dinner Hosted By His Excellency Abdelaziz Bouteflika
President Of The People's Democratic Republic Of Algeria**

Algiers, People's Democratic Republic Of Algeria 11 August
2003

Thank you, Mr. President, for your kind words of welcome. It is indeed a pleasure for me, my wife and my delegation to be in Algiers. I am very glad that I have finally been able to undertake this visit. On behalf of my wife and members of my delegation, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to you, your Government and the people of Algeria for the warm hospitality and excellent arrangements extended to us since our arrival in your beautiful and historic country.

2. Both Malaysia and Algeria are fairly young nations. We were both colonised - Malaysia by the British and Algeria by the French. Our past experiences may be diverse, our histories may be different but beyond all these, we have something in common, that we share a common destiny. We both aspire for our countries to develop and for our people to prosper.

3. Malaysia follows with keen interest Algeria's relentless efforts to improve the economic and social well being of her people. The economic reforms that are being introduced and implemented in the country illustrate Algeria's determination to achieve this goal. Algeria has enormous potential, not only in terms of its natural wealth, but also in its well-educated young people. Algeria has successfully concluded the Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreement with the EU and the negotiations to join the WTO is progressing well. This will give a clear message to the international community of the vast potential of trade and investment that Algeria has to offer. Algeria's active role and participation in NEPAD is also laudable. The future of Algeria is indeed very bright and I am fully confident that under your able leadership, Mr President, Algeria will emerge as one of the most successful economies of the continent.

4. To achieve economic development is not easy. Malaysia's own experience is not rosy. There are bound to be difficulties but these are not insurmountable. Hard work, determination and proper planning and determined execution are keys to achieve economic development. Malaysia is ready to share what little experience it has in developing and managing its economy with fellow developing countries. In this regard, I earnestly hope that the study on the diversification of Algeria's economy that the Malaysian team of experts had concluded earlier this year, has helped Algeria in outlining its economic strategy. This is only a small contribution that my Government could offer to a friendly country like Algeria.

5. My visit here, a first by a Malaysian Prime Minister, is to further reaffirm Malaysia's commitment to this spirit of friendship and co-operation. Earlier today, we have had candid and fruitful discussions on numerous bilateral topics. We must work together to lift our relations to a new and more meaningful height. Aside from the existing co-operation that exists between our two national oil companies, Petronas and Sonatrach, in the oil and gas industry, we have identified several other potential sectors in which we could explore further, including the Information and Communications Technology (ICT), constructions, education and tourism.

6. In terms of bilateral trade, I am happy to note that the statistics of the last few years have shown an upward trend. Last year, our bilateral trade amounted to approximately USD 100 million. This figure is marginal and does not reflect the true potential of our trade. I believe much more can be done. The private sectors of both our countries must engage themselves more aggressively and work on establishing mutually profitable trade ties. Distance should not be an impediment to better interactions between people and the business community. Direct trading should also be encouraged rather than through a third country. I have in my delegation, key personalities and representatives of the Malaysian business community who are keen to meet and discuss with their Algerian counterparts on a wide-range of business possibilities. The signing of the Trade Agreement this morning should further facilitate, strengthen and expand our trade exchange regime.

7. Premised on mutual respect and understanding, the relations between Malaysia and Algeria have improved by leaps and bounds. We should now focus on strengthening these relations. People-to-people contact is equally important and should be encouraged. Before, we could say that the news about Malaysia does not reach Algeria, and vice versa. To improve knowledge about each other we should initiate news exchange activities. The signing of the News Exchange Agreement between our two national news agencies, BERNAMA and Alg,rie Presse Service (APS), I believe, will contribute positively towards generating better understanding about each other, which in turn, will strengthen our all-encompassing bilateral relations.

8. At the international level, Malaysia and Algeria have co-operated meaningfully in various fora such as the UN, NAM, OIC, G-77 and G-15. I wish to take this opportunity to thank you, Mr. President, for your presence, support and immense contribution during the NAM Summit, which my country has had the honour of hosting last February. I trust that Malaysia can again continue to count on Algeria's full support and

constructive participation at the upcoming OIC Summit to be held in October.

9. Muslim countries must unite to defend our image. The perception of Islam as a religion that promotes acts of terror should be corrected. Both Malaysia and Algeria share a common position in the fight against terrorism. Malaysia continues to believe that a universally accepted definition of terrorism is vital to enable the international community to take a concerted and effective action against terrorism. The causes of terrorism must also be attended to.

10. Malaysia would like a return to the multilateral system in achieving world peace through the UN especially in solving the problem in Iraq. Iraq is very likely to descend into anarchy unless the United Nations takes full control. The Iraqis must regain their independence soonest.

11. On that note, Mr. President, allow me to once again express my deepest gratitude for the warm reception and hospitality accorded to my wife and me, and to members of my delegation. I am sure we will leave Algeria with many fond memories.